Men-at-Arms

OSPREY PUBLISHING

Napoleon's Red Lancers

Ronald Pawly • Illustrated by Patrice Courcelle

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Men-at-Arms • 389

Napoleon's Red Lancers

Ronald Pawly • Illustrated by Patrice Courcelle
Series editor Martin Windrow

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

NAPOLEON'S RED LANCERS

ORIGINS

This unidentified Dutch officer wears the uniform of the Hussars of the Dutch Royal Guard of King Louis of Holland, the unit which provided the basis for the Red Lancers in 1810. The dolman is dark blue faced with scarlet, the pelisse scarlet trimmed with black fur, the lace gold. Note the earring. (Collection of Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)

On Friday 15 August 1811, Napoleon's official birthday, the emperor began his day by receiving the congratulations of the diplomatic corps. Later he attended Mass; and at 12 noon he entered the throne room, where the grand dignitaries and the officers of the Imperial Guard paid their respects. Later that day Napoleon and his staff reviewed a parade of his Foot and Horse Guard. The élite of the élite, the most famous soldiers of their age, paraded in front of the most powerful man in the world, commanded by officers whose names and titles echoed a dozen famous battles, clothed in the splendour of richly embroidered uniforms.

Even in such company, one cavalry regiment of this corps particularly attracted the eyes of the Parisians; clad in bright scarlet and blue uniforms in the Polish style, these superb horsemen were much admired by crowds who were no strangers to marvellous shows of military display. General Edouard Colbert, the colonel of the regiment, had made an extra effort for this important day. Following the example of their brother regiments, he had even added a regimental band and a kettle-drummer – a young boy clad in the most wonderful uniform, whose horse was guided by means of long scarlet reins by two NCOs riding each side of him. The men of the regiment were tall, generally fair-haired, and of Dutch origin. Their unit was the newly raised 2nd Regiment of Light Horse Lancers of the Imperial Guard – known after this parade, and from 1813 even in official documents, as the Red Lancers. But who were these men, and how did they, as foreigners, arrive in the ranks of the French Imperial Guard?

* * *

When France overran the Netherlands in 1794 during the Revolutionary Wars, the Austrian-ruled southern Netherlands – what we now know as Belgium – became part of the Republic. The northern region, the United Provinces, had been independent for generations; now it was organised under French control into the Batavian Republic, a vassal state to France and as such obliged to provide troops to the French army.

In 1805, LtGen Dumonceau reorganised the entire Batavian army, and in the process created a corps of Life Guards for the Batavian President R.J.Schimmelpenninck. However, the republic was to be short-lived: in 1806, Napoleon transformed the Batavian Republic into the Kingdom of Holland, pushing the Dutch authorities into asking the emperor whether he would agree to have his brother Louis assume the vacant throne.

The history of King Louis' Royal Guard Cavalry between 1806 and 1810 is one of a succession of reorganisations accompanied by

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Portrait by Johannes Hari the Elder of Captain Abraham Calkoen (1780–1830) wearing the Cuirassier uniform of an officer of the Dutch Royal Guard, 1809; he had already served in the Danish army before entering Dutch service. As an officer with the Red Lancers, 1810–13, it was recorded of him that he 'knew his job, but served with nonchalance.' We may presume that this attitude did not survive the retreat from Moscow, during which he had to leave his brother, a *vélite* in the regiment, at the hospital of Gumbinnen on 18 December 1812. He later served in Saxony and France as a squadron commander in the 3rd Line Lancers before rejoining the Dutch army after the First Restoration.

a never-ending series of uniform changes. In 1809 the Dutch 3rd Hussar Regiment, serving with the French in Spain, became part of the Guard in recognition of their campaign service. The cadres of two squadrons were allowed to return home, leaving one squadron in Spain.

Once on his throne, however, King Louis soon forgot that he did not sit on it by the grace of God but by the grace of his brother the emperor, who considered him not as a co-equal monarch but only as some kind of viceroy or proconsul to do the Imperial bidding. Political relations between France and Holland deteriorated. For years the emperor even accused his brother of making Holland into an 'English province' – a reference to the illegal commerce between the two countries despite Napoleon's blockade decrees; Anglo-Dutch trade had a centuries-old history and to suppress it would have ruined Louis' new subjects. In 1809 Dutch reaction to the British Walcheren expedition made things worse, and Napoleon acted decisively and ruthlessly. He forced his brother to abdicate and decreed the unification of the two countries; henceforth the Dutch army would simply be absorbed into the French army.

The last parade of the Dutch Royal Guard in front of their king was held at Haarlem in June 1810. Shortly afterwards, the Dutch people were officially informed of Louis' abdication; and on 14 July the state journal announced the annexation of Holland into the Empire, the former kingdom being divided into nine *departements*. Most of the officers and soldiers of the Royal Guard accepted the situation with some enthusiasm, as Article 14 of the decree ordered the incorporation of the Royal Guard into the Imperial Guard. They were used to fighting alongside the French army; now they would have the honour of serving with this invincible Guard under the greatest captain in history. They must have felt very flattered; in a little over two years they would find out what price they had to pay.

The larger part of the officers and troopers stayed with the corps, and those who left were mainly those who were too old to serve or – in the case of the officers – those who did not speak French. Soon the Royal Guard received orders to depart for Paris.

From Royal Guard to Imperial Guard

On Thursday 10 August 1810, commanded by Colonel Dubois, the Hussars of the former Royal Guard left their depot at Deventer to take the road towards the pre-Revolutionary French capital, Versailles, which would be their new quarters. Five days later the Hussars were at Hoogstraeten, a village close to the Dutch-French border. From here Captain & Adjutant-Major Domengé of the Mounted Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard would guide them towards Versailles, taking care of all necessary formalities such as overnight quarters, and ensuring that the

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

local authorities showed the respect due to a corps of the Imperial Guard. At last, late in August, the regiment marched through Le Bourget, passing by Montmartre towards the Bois de Boulogne, and crossed it to reach Versailles. When they reached the Place d'Armes, in front of the former royal palace, the entire officer corps and officer aspirants (*vélites)* of the Guard cavalry regiments then in garrison at Versailles turned out to greet the Hussars.

That evening, in fine warm weather, the French officers offered a splendid dinner to their new Dutch brothers-in-arms. The sentiment of belonging to the same élite corps made fraternisation a success. After dinner, armed with torches, Frenchmen and Dutchmen walked into the park carrying with them an enormous bowl of punch. Stopping in front of every pond and fountain, they toasted the honour of the emperor and his Guard. Around midnight everybody went to their quarters and those who were able to find their beds slept in them; the others stayed out on the pavement in front of the barracks, under the summer stars.

The next day, 31 August, it was the troopers' turn to be invited for a meal in the barracks of the Horse Grenadiers, Dragoons and Chasseurs. The Dutch and French soldiers did not understand each other, but under these circumstances language did not prove much of an obstacle to fraternisation; the Dutchmen had not been accustomed to drinking wine… Before long some of the revellers were exchanging uniforms with French vélites, unaware that it would cause problems. The disguised vélites later went into town, where they proceeded to disturb the peace and insult respectable citizens. Complaints were made at every hierarchical level, from the mayor to the prefect of the department, the commanding officers, and the generals up to Marshal Bessières; Minister of Police Savary and even the emperor got involved. An investigation was held, the Dutch troopers were vindicated, and the guilty vélites were sent to the army in Spain – the equivalent of a German Army posting to the Russian Front in World War II.

Still clad in their old hussar undress uniforms, the new regiment would be reviewed by Napoleon on Sunday 2 September. The whole Imperial Guard was present – some 20,000 officers and men, commanded by Marshal Bessières, Colonel General of the Guard Cavalry. This parade was meant to mark the official welcome to the former Dutch Guard into the French corps.

The proceedings did not finish until around 8pm, when the troops were ordered to return to their quarters. The different regiments, marching in column formation, were held up by a bottleneck at the bridge of Sèvres. The delay annoyed the hot, tired, thirsty Dutch troopers; leaving their ranks, some of them went into houses looking for a drink. General Tindal, commanding the Dutch Foot Guards, was able to rally his men. To make things worse, a storm broke out; the choking dust of the roads soon turned into splashing mud, and the white uniforms of the Dutch Foot Grenadiers became a horrible spectacle. The situation did not improve when the Dutch Hussars, eager to get back to their Versailles barracks as quickly as possible, overtook the infantry by forcing their way past them. This incident created friction between the troops, with consequences that were reported to Marshal Bessières; the commanding officers were later summoned and received an outburst.

Captain Walraven E.J.van Balveren (1784–1865) in the uniform of an officer in the Dutch Royal Guard. A highly regarded officer, he would later be in charge of training the *vélites* or aspirant officers serving in the ranks of the Red Lancers, most of whom died in Russia. Van Balveren left the regiment without permission in spring 1814, and was present at Waterloo with the Dutch army.

A Polish-style undress cap or *confederatka* worn by *Chef d'escadron* De Watteville – see Plate C4. It is of fine scarlet cloth with a black fur band and gold oakleaf embroidery. (Musée d'Histoire de Berne, Switzerland)

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Light Horse Lancer, by Bellangé. Only one source, Dumonceau, mentions an 'N' badge on the shabraque – oddly reversed here; they cannot be found in the orders placed for equipment between 1811 and 1814. A common error is showing the lance pennon with scarlet above; white above scarlet was a distinction of the Red Lancers. (Author's collection)

Strength and nationality

Life was not only a round of feasts and parades, however. As soon as the regiment arrived in Versailles their reorganisation started. A list was made of those officers who were fit to serve, and by 21 September 1810, Col Dubois and the *Inspecteur aux Revues de la Garde*, Félix, had already done most of the work. The regiment counted 11 staff officers, six captains, 16 lieutenants, 16 sub-lieutenants; 11 troopers with the staff; 173 NCOs, trumpeters and *maréchaux-ferrants;* and 661 troopers. This gave a strength of 894 men and 865 horses.

The organisation and establishment, which would be confirmed by orders of 29 January and 8 February 1811, was in four squadrons each of two companies. Each company was divided into two troops *(pelotons)* and had an establishment of four officers: the captain commanding, one lieutenant, and two sub-lieutenants commanding troops. The company would have a sergeant-major, a quartermaster corporal, three trumpeters, two farriers, six sergeants, ten corporals, and 97 lancers.

Some 45 non-Dutch soldiers were serving with the regiment; these were dispersed to other units or served as supernumeraries until 30 October, when a decree regulated the situation of foreigners in the regiment. All officers, NCOs and troopers of the former Dutch Royal Guard who had been born in Oldenburg, in the Duchy of Berg, in Westphalia or the Hanseatic towns; all Germans who had served as volunteers in the Dutch Guard without interruption since 1800, without deserting; and all Germans or other foreigners who had been present at the capture of Ulm or the battle of Stralsund, were considered to be 'Dutch', and could stay with the regiment.

Since he did not yet know personally the senior Dutch officers, and the regiment was nearly formed, Napoleon decided to put an experienced and trusted officer of French birth at its head. Until he found this officer he had the corps placed under the direct control of Marshal Bessières, commander of the Guard Cavalry; the temporary regimental commander would remain ColMaj Charles Dubois, with Maj Jan van Hasselt acting as second in command.

From hussars to lancers

That the regiment would not continue to be classed as hussars had already been confirmed by a decree of 13 September 1810. Transformed into lancers, they would now begin learning how to handle this awkward if deadly weapon. Their instructors would be the 1st Lancers of the Guard; this Polish regiment had carried the weapon since a decree of November 1809, and had themselves been instructed in its use by fellow Poles from the Lancers of the Legion of the Vistula. On 27 November 1810, Lt AdjMaj Fallot and eight NCOs went to the Polish Lancers'

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

barracks at Chantilly for a month's drilling in how to manipulate the lance, later returning to Versailles to pass on their knowledge to the rest of the regiment. From this point onwards the regiment always mounted armed with the lance, even when they were still wearing their old hussar undress uniform. The new uniform was decreed on 10 February 1811, but would not be worn before 15 August of that year. The regiment's complicated background had already required so many changes of uniform – ruinously expensive for the officers – that the Minister of War asked the emperor for the necessary credits to pay for the new ones. (On being obliged to change from Cuirassiers into Hussars at the end of King Louis' reign the officers had not been reimbursed for the expense of their richly embroidered new outfits, and as a result many of them had gone into debt). Some 600 of the soldiers still wore the hussar undress uniform; 240 coming from the Dutch 3rd Hussars wore their old blue uniforms; and 107 men from the former Life Guards had only waistcoats and trousers. The entire regiment was so badly clothed and with so many different items that it had to be considered as a totally new corps to be equipped from scratch. Even so, the decree stipulated that the new uniform was only to be provided when the old one was worn out. Most of the officers nevertheless ordered theirs privately, so they were more quickly dressed in uniforms of better materials and superior cut to those of their troopers.

On 16 March, after a vacancy of some seven months, the emperor signed a decree nominating the severe and highly qualified Gen Baron Edouard Colbert as commanding colonel of the regiment. During a splendid parade at the Tuileries on 30 June 1811, Napoleon presented the regiment with its Eagle standard. This was still the 1804 model, measuring 60cm x 60cm and carried on a blue staff 2.10m long surmounted by the bronze eagle; the silk cloth had a white central lozenge set between alternating blue and red corners. This early type of flag would soon be replaced by the 1812 model, which had vertical tricolour stripes embroidered with gold.

General Baron Edouard Colbert de Chabanais (1774–1853), commanding officer of the Red Lancers, in his full dress uniform with a fur coat thrown over his shoulders – see Plate A1. The double width of golden oakleaf embroidery and the red and gold waist sash indicate his army rank of *général de division*. This very experienced and much wounded cavalry officer was nicknamed *Eisenmann* ('Iron Man'). (Château d'Ainay-le-Vieil, France)

The carbine controversy

Late in 1811 the personal weapons of the troopers were increased. With a war against Russia in mind, Napoleon wanted to be prepared. As well as sabres and lances the Russian Cossacks carried pistols and carbines (or in some cases, bows and arrows). To have an answer to this longer range threat he had some carbines issued to the Red Lancers for practice. In one of the alleys of the park of Versailles these soldiers exercised in the presence of Marshal Bessières and Majors Dubois and van Hasselt. Half an hour later Bessières, still undecided, returned to Paris. Opinions differed: some believed that the carbine would be valuable for skirmishing and keeping the enemy light cavalry at a distance, while others were concerned over the practicality of loading the troopers with such an arsenal – a sabre, a lance, two saddle pistols, and now a slung carbine. The Russian campaign would prove that both schools of thought were right. Carbines were clearly issued, and were handy for keeping the Cossacks at a distance; but the weight of all the weaponry was too much for the horses (especially after the *An XI* sabre with its massive iron scabbard replaced the lighter Chasseur pattern), sometimes causing severe injury.

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Instruction of vélites

The regiment also received vélites or officer aspirants. These were all quartered in the same barracks and had Capt van Balveren and Lt van Omphal as instructors. The vélites had to rise at 5am and had one hour to prepare their uniforms and equipment and to get dressed. At 6am they went to the stables to groom the horses until 7.30am; from 8am until 10.30am they took lessons in horsemanship, and at 11am they were served 'soup' – the first daytime meal. After this they were drilled on foot in the handling of the lance; then until 2pm they groomed the horses once more. A deserved break and 'soup' lasted until 4pm, when they received another hour of theoretical instruction; at 9pm they went to bed. Three times a week they were taught mathematics; and on Mondays and Fridays, from 6.30pm until 8pm, they had lessons in equine anatomy and the care of sick or wounded horses.

One of the exercises for aspirant officers was to learn a good voice for giving orders. For this they formed a circle around ColMaj Dubois, who had a superb 'word of command', and one after another they had to repeat his orders in a voice that had to carry like thunder.

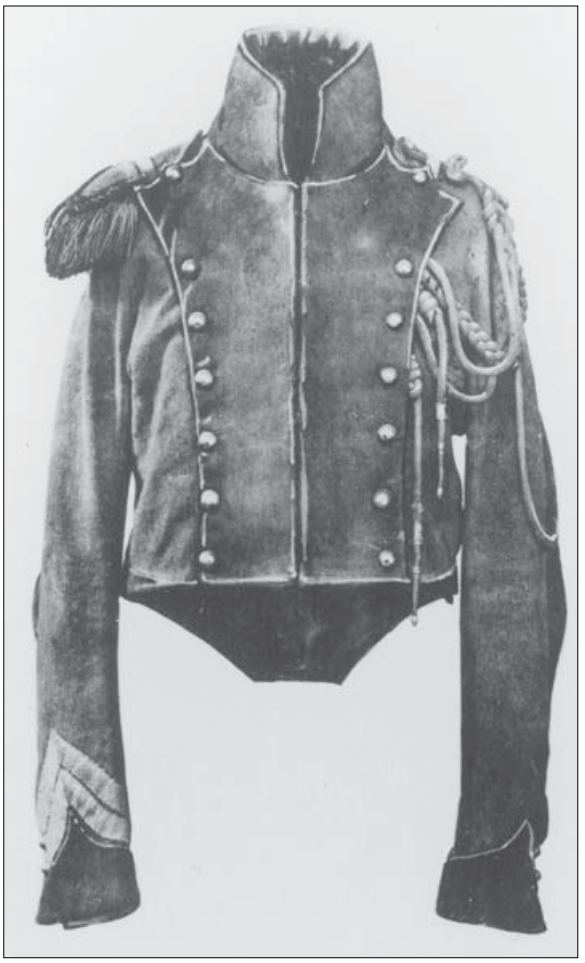
* * *

Social life was at first found in Paris, but the more the Dutch soldiers learned their way around in Versailles the more time was spent there. The wives who had accompanied their husbands with their children saw each other as much as possible, and in Versailles one soon heard as much Dutch as French spoken. Life was enjoyable but expensive; when a woman went shopping with her husband she saw prices rise according to the medals he wore on his uniform. The Empire was at the height of its power. Paris was the capital of the world, where concerts, balls and parades followed each other in a spectacular whirl; but detachments of the regiment also accompanied Napoleon on his state visits throughout the Empire.

In autumn 1811 the emperor and empress left Paris to visit the Channel coast and the newly gained territories of Holland. As well as the Guard squadrons who always accompanied the emperor, he now summoned a large detachment of the Red Lancers. Napoleon left Compiègne on 19 September; travelling via Boulogne, Ostend and Flushing, he entered Amsterdam on 9 October. On this occasion the Red Lancers had the honour of leading the march, with 27 trumpeters all clad in their superb white and scarlet full dress uniforms. It was a triumph for the regiment, who not only escorted the emperor but also provided interpreters. However, Napoleon complained to Marshal Bessières that the Red Lancers had not enough experience to escort him; late in November 1811 the detachment returned to Versailles – they still had a lot to learn.

Portrait of Edouard Colbert's young nephew Napoléon Auguste, dressed in the uniform of a junior officer of Red Lancers. It was not unusual for regimental commanding officers to dress their little boys in the uniform of their corps. With no children of his own, Edouard more or less adopted the son of his brother Gen August Colbert, who had been killed in Spain on 3 January 1809 by Thomas Plunket of the British 95th Rifles. (Château d'Ainay-le-Vieil, France)

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com



Uniform *kurtka* of a *maître-ouvrier* of the Red Lancers – a senior technical rank, who would have served at the depot. Note the double yellow corporal's chevrons above the right cuff only; the epaulette and aiguillettes; and the very short cut of the tail. (Author's collection)

UNIFORMS

Headdress

Like the 1st Light Horse Lancers of the Imperial Guard, better known as the Polish Lancers, the Dutch Lancers wore the Polish-style square-topped lancer cap or *czapska*. The body was reinforced with cane and cardboard and covered with scarlet cloth. Yellow piping followed the edges of the crown, the four vertical edges, and made a cross on the top surface. Each corner was protected with a brass ornament, that on the right holding a hook onto which the chinstrap, of interlaced brass chains on red cloth, could be fastened up when not in use. A broad band of yellow wool braid covered the junction between crown and skull. The black leather skull had a frontal peak in the same material, edged in brass. The rosettes holding the chinstrap on each side had a gorgon's head motif, replaced by a lion's head in 1812. A tall brass 'sunburst' cap plate had a roughly semi-circular tinned centre bearing a brass crowned 'N'. The French tricolour cockade was fixed to the left front of the crown.

For parades the Lancers dressed the czapska with a yellow tasselled cord and a 47cm high white plume. For campaign use the czapska was protected by a black oiled canvas cover.

Kurtka

The scarlet Polish-style coat, very much adapted for riding, had distinctively short folded and squared dark blue lapels, fastened centrally by hooks-and-eyes and with outer rows of brass buttons. The jacket was often worn buttoned right over left, hiding the dark blue facing except for a line down the buttoned edge. Two piped pocket flaps were lined up with the rear edge of the short dark blue turnbacks; lapels, dark blue high collar and pointed cuffs were of classic cut. Dark blue piping was applied to the back seams running from the bottom of the skirts up to the shoulder seams and thence down the back of the sleeves to the cuffs. A blue-piped sword belt tab buttoned upwards on the left flank from just above the turnback.

A fringed yellow wool epaulette with a dark blue crescent was worn on the right shoulder only, balanced on the left by yellow shoulder cords extending into aiguillettes. Rank insignia were worn *en pique* above each cuff, in yellow for corporals and gold for sergeants and above. Senior NCOs' aiguillettes, epaulette fringe and cap cords were in mixed gold and red. A self-portrait by the vélite Alexandre Dubois(-Drahonet) clearly shows mixed yellow, red and blue aiguillettes on his left shoulder – see page 43. Another unidentified portrait of a quartermaster of the regiment shows the *fourrier's* diagonal at the top of his left sleeve as gold, with mixed yellow and blue (and possibly red?) aiguillettes on his right shoulder – see page 47.

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Squadrons designated as part of the Young Guard had the same style of uniforms but with reversed colours – dark blue faced and piped with scarlet.

Legwear

Full dress uniform trousers were scarlet, the front opening flap buttoned on either side. The side seams were decorated with blue piping set between two blue stripes. The outsides of the legs were open for several centimetres up from the bottom of the sideseam, closed with a buttonhole and a button that was also used for the black leather strap passing under the instep.

On the march, dark blue campaign **overalls** were worn. The outside of each leg was decorated with a wide stripe of scarlet cloth bearing 18 brass buttons. Two pockets, the three-pointed flaps piped in red and buttoned, were set on the front of the hips. Black leather 'booting' of variable extent reinforced the bottoms of the legs and the insides up to crotch.

The **boots** were short and worn under the trousers and overalls, of supple black leather in the 'Mameluke' style, with fixed spurs.

Cloak

The light blue *manteau-capote* was actually a riding overcoat which could be buttoned at the front, with a high collar, sleeves, and a deep shoulder cape. A scarlet collar has been mentioned. The cut was voluminous, so that it would cover the whole saddle area in bad weather.

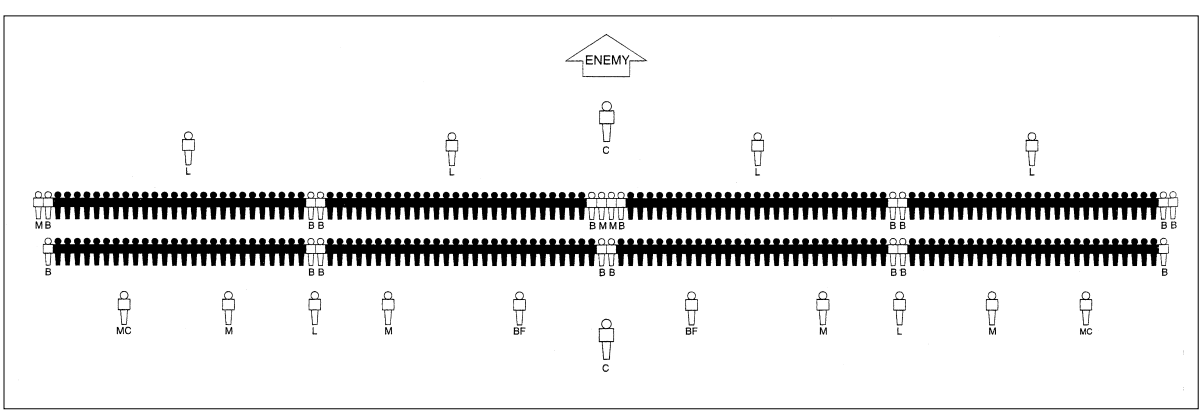
Stable dress

The round-cut stable jacket or sleeved 'waistcoat' – *gilet d'écurie* – was in light blue cloth with two rows of brass front buttons, and a high red collar. It was worn with plain canvas trousers of an unbleached drab shade, fastened up the outside seams with 18 horn buttons. The waistcoat was often worn as a cheaper campaign alternative to the kurtka.

The **fatigue cap** – *bonnet de police* – was in full uniform colours: a dark blue 'turban' or band edged with yellow braid, and a scarlet 'flame' or long, tucked-in crown piped and tasselled in yellow.

Equipment & weapons

Whitened leather – swordbelt with square brass buckle plate stamped



Composition of a squadron in battle formation, following a decree of 29 January 1811. C = *capitaine*, L = *lieutenant* or *sous-lieutenant*, MC = *maréchal-des-logis-chef* (sergeant-major), M = *maréchal-des-logis* (sergeant), BF = *brigadier-fourrier* (quartermaster), B = *brigadier* (corporal). Corporals and troopers in both ranks carried lances.

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

with the Imperial eagle; two sabre slings; sabre knot, cartridge pouch belt; gauntlets. All Guard cavalry units had superior quality belting with reinforcing lines of stitching inset from either edge. Blackened leather cartridge pouch, the flap badged with a brass crowned 'N'. At the end of 1811 the Red Lancers were issued with a carbine and bayonet and additional whitened leather equipment: a carbine belt with spring hook and retaining strap added to the pouch belt, a bayonet frog added to the sword belt, and a protective carbine lock cover.

The Red Lancers were initially authorised the Guard Mounted Chasseurs sabre with a brass hilt and brass-sheathed scabbard; from 1813 these were replaced with the *An XI* light cavalry sabre with its heavy iron scabbard. The original lance introduced in December 1809 had an overall length of 2.75m, with a blackened wood shaft and a steel head and ferrule. This was later replaced by the new 1812 model, 2.26m long. The swallow-tail pennant was halved in white over scarlet serge (silk for parade occasions), which on the march was rolled inside a black fabric cover. The saddle pistols were of *An IX* or *An XIII* pattern, and the carbine was the *An XIII* model. Pistols were always in short supply and it is likely that many men received only one.

Trumpeter in white and scarlet full dress, by Detaille. He shows the plume as red tipped with white, but see commentaries to Plate F for discussion of such details. (Collection of Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)

Horse furniture

All leather items were blackened. The light cavalry saddle was covered with a dark blue shabraque, edged with wide yellow wool braid in double stripes; the rear corners were decorated with a yellow crowned eagle. The saddle cover was of black sheepskin with either a yellow or a scarlet 'vandyked' edge – sources differ. The valise was scarlet with yellow piping and lace at the ends.

Officers

Officers wore essentially the same uniform but of finer materials and more fashionable cut. Gold bullion thread embroidery and lace replaced the yellow worn on enlisted ranks' uniforms. The most obvious difference, however, was that officers wore their gold aiguillettes on the right shoulder, and thus buttoned the kurtka across from left to right. (See Plates for further details.)

Trumpeters

Their full dress uniform had a white kurtka faced and piped with scarlet, gold-striped scarlet trousers, and gold lace collar and lapel edging and buttonhole loops. Gold replaced yellow at all points, and they wore the mixed scarlet and gold distinctions of senior NCOs. White replaced scarlet on the crown of the czapska, which was dressed with mixed scarlet and gold cords and flounders; the plume seems to have been black with a white tip before 1813 and white with a red tip thereafter. The trumpet-major sometimes wore a white busby with a scarlet bag.

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

A trooper of the Red Lancers in full dress by Louis F.Lejeune (died 1848) – cf Plate D1. The crown of the *czapska* is scarlet, the 'sunburst' plate of brass alloy with a brass crowned 'N' on a silver-coloured ground; the chinstrap rosette, brass; the skull, black leather with a yellow lace band over the junction with the crown; the peak, black leather with brass binding; the cords and flounders yellow, and the plume white. The *kurtka* and trousers are scarlet; the facings, stripes and piping are dark blue; the aiguillettes are yellow; all metal is brass alloy; the belt, slings and sword knot are white leather; the Chasseur sabre and scabbard have brass furniture. (Collection of Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)

The trumpeters' shabraque was scarlet edged with gold braid, the sheepskin cover white. (See Plate F for details.)

The trumpeters' undress uniform was a dark sky blue kurtka faced and piped with scarlet, and trimmed with gold lace. On campaign this was worn with the usual covered cap and leather-trimmed overalls. (See Plate G.)

THE 1812 CAMPAIGN

At the start of the year, news of massive troop movements caused rumours of an impending campaign to spread through the regiment. Napoleon had long brooded over the prospect of launching a war against Russia. Thinking it would be a second Polish campaign, he could not foresee that it would take him to Moscow but deny him ultimate victory. In mid-January 1812, the first sign that the 2nd Light Horse Lancers would be involved was an order to send two officers to the remount depot in Hanover. Activity increased; the men finally received carbines; and on 8 February Napoleon ordered Marshal Bessières to get the Red Lancers on the march on the 10th. They were to leave Versailles and march towards Brussels, but to avoid advertising their departure they were to bypass Paris.

On the morning of 9 February the regimental officers were informed, and the time of departure was set for midnight that same day. The troopers only received the news of a march at the evening roll call, and were not informed of the itinerary.

At midnight the regiment formed up in the Avenue St Cloud – 700 men armed with lances made a massive column. At the same time, several other Guard units marched off by other routes; assembling in Brussels, they would form the First Guard Division under the command of Gen Delaborde. Passing by Chantilly, quarters of their Polish brothers-in-arms, the Dutch troopers were eagerly questioned about the reason for this manoeuvre – a question which was left unanswered.

At Creil, Gen Colbert took over command of the regiment from ColMaj Dubois and briefed the officers about the marching orders, daily assemblies, and all the other necessary procedural details for a disciplined march towards an unknown destination. The regimental standard was left behind by special order of the emperor, indicating that the two Lancer regiments of his Guard would not carry Eagles during the coming campaign (this precaution would be repeated in 1813 and 1814).

From Brussels the regiment marched towards Holland, where some officers asked for permission to take the occasion to visit their families. Arriving at Munster on 15 March, their march through the winter landscape brought them to Osnabruck, Minden and Hanover, where they found the two officers and men of the regiment who had been sent ahead to organise remount facilities. The long march and the heavy weight of the arms and equipment had already caused the first casualties among the regiment's horses, and more than one had to be exchanged and left behind at the Hanover depot.

The march continued eastwards across Germany; and when the regiment arrived at Magdebourg on 1 April 1812 it mustered 690 men. Crossing the Elbe, they marched into Prussia; here the welcome they

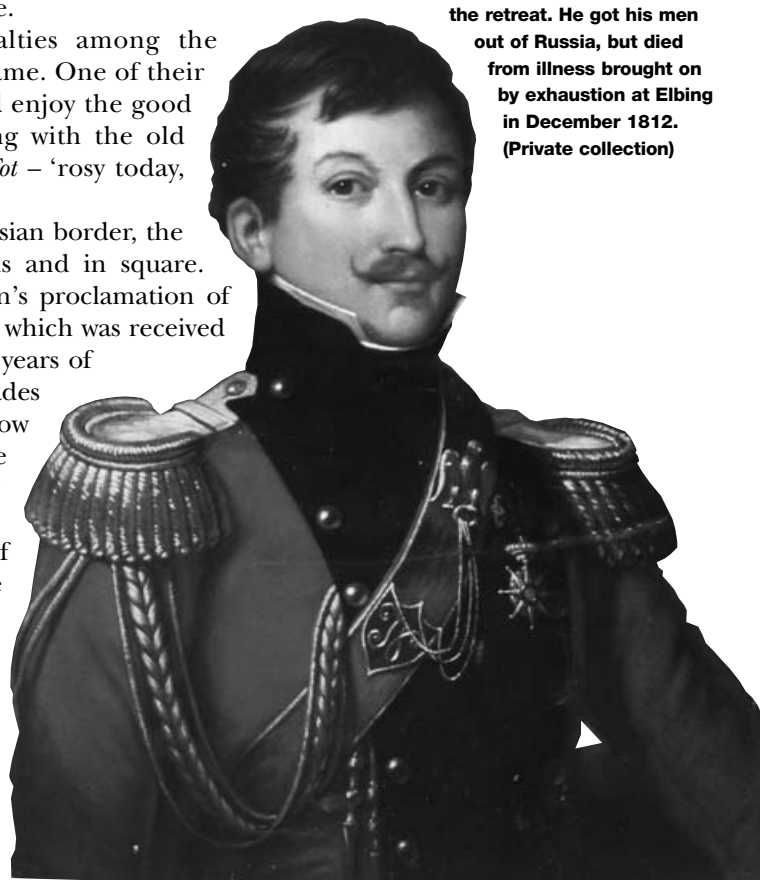
© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

received from the inhabitants was noticeably cooler than in the other countries they had recently crossed. However, when the march led them close to the royal palace at Potsdam, the king of Prussia asked Marshal Oudinot about the Red Lancers; and the marshal, out of courtesy towards France's new (if unwilling) ally, asked Gen Colbert to present some of his officers to the king. Accompanied by his two sons, the king admired their uniforms and expressed his satisfaction, instructing one of his adjutants to show the two officers round the royal palace.

Back on the long road, the regiment continued through the sandy East Prussian countryside dotted with lakes, which brought them to Stettin on 12 April. Even in spring the Polish weather was chilly, and the men and horses were tired by their ride across most of Europe. Some of the officers thought they were marching towards Warsaw, but were surprised to see the roads increasingly covered with troops from all parts of the empire and its allied nations – something extraordinary was taking place. For months they had been marching through country after country, rich and poor, with different climates and landscapes, different food and customs. Now they were flowing together, streams joining into human rivers, rivers forming one enormous, slow flood of military power. Everwhere the Red Lancers rode they saw infantry, cavalry, artillery, supply convoys, coming from as far away as Cadiz on the furthest edge of Europe – men in uniforms of every colour under the sun, speaking a Babel of languages. It dawned on the Red Lancers that their proud regiment was just a minute drop in this human sea – the half-million strong Grande Armée.

The journey had caused casualties among the horses, but the men took life as it came. One of their officers wrote home that they would enjoy the good times as long as they lasted, ending with the old German saying, *Heute Rot, Morgen Tot* – 'rosy today, dead tomorrow morning'.

On 24 June 1812, close to the Russian border, the regiment was drawn up under arms and in square. Adjutant Fallot read aloud Napoleon's proclamation of the coming campaign against Russia, which was received with cheers of *'Vive l'Empereur!'* After years of peace, and inactivity except for parades and garrison duties, they could now prove themselves in the ranks of the glorious Imperial Guard and under direct command of the emperor. Nobody worried about the outcome of the campaign; they expected it to be just one huge hunting party.



Posthumous portrait of Major Jan van Hasselt (1776–1812). As in all portraits of the regiment's officers, the scarlet is shown as glowingly rich, the blue facings as very dark. Note the paired gold epaulettes of a field grade officer, worn over the aiguillettes on the right shoulder; the silvered eagle and 'N' on the gold-laced pouch belt, which shows red leather at the edge; and the blue-ribboned cross of the Imperial Order of the Reunion, the second Grand Order of the Empire. Van Hasselt distinguished himself in Russia, where he led the raid on Orcha which captured large magazines before the retreating Russians could burn them. Later he received news that his wife had died in childbirth. Although given permission to return to Versailles to make arrangements for the care of his other children, he refused to leave his men behind, and later commanded the dismounted detachment during the retreat. He got his men out of Russia, but died from illness brought on by exhaustion at Elbing in December 1812. (Private collection)

Into Russia

Crossing the Niemen dismounted, they followed the leading army corps towards Kovno. For days and nights on end they would remain dressed and armed, their horses saddled and packed. Arriving in Vilna in

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Portrait of *Sous-lieutenant* Adriaan P.Paats van Wijchel, strangely represented in the uniform of a trooper. Wounded and captured on 27 July 1812 at Babinovitz, where he and Lt van Zuylen were playing billiards when their company was surprised by Russian Ulans, he would die in Russian captivity the following January. (Musée Napoléonien d'Art et d'Histoire, Fontainebleau, France)

bad weather, the Lancers were ordered to march with Marshal Davout's I Corps, which was advancing on the Russian army of Prince Bagration in order to prevent him from linking up with the armies of Barclay de Tolly, who was retiring to the north. Arriving at Ochmiana on 2 July, the regiment soon received orders to march in between Marshal Davout's I Corps and the main force under the emperor. Speed became essential, in order to take bridges and magazines before the retreating Russian army could burn them. With this in mind, the Red Lancers became the spearhead of Napoleon's invading army. They met no serious resistance, but were sometimes ordered to stop because they had got two days ahead of the Grande Armée's vanguard.

Taking Vileyka on 8 July, the Red Lancers saved huge magazines and convoys of stores and animal feed, for an army that was already becoming desperate for forage on the baking summer plains. Leaving the town for Plechnitsi three days later, they received early in the morning an order from Davout to join Gen Grouchy's 3rd Reserve Cavalry Corps to capture the well-supplied magazines of Borisov by a swift advance. On 13 July, at the ford of Studianka, they crossed a small, insignificant river that bore the name Beresina. On reaching Borisov they found that the 3rd Cavalry Corps had already arrived, but too late to save the Russian magazines.

After all these forced marches, Gen Colbert allowed his regiment a single day's rest near a well-provisioned farm; but that evening he got orders to set out for Orcha on the Dnieper in order to take the city and its storehouses. He pushed his regiment on towards Orcha as fast as possible, passing Krupka, Bobr, and Toloczin – where Colbert's troopers seized Russian despatches, and a huge convoy carrying food, forage, weapons and ammunition. Their speed was so great that they found themselves at least 20 miles ahead of Gen Grouchy's corps and at risk of getting cut off from the rest of the army; consequently Marshal Davout now strengthened Colbert's command by assigning it the French 6th Hussars and Grouchy's foreign brigade. At 2am on the morning of 20 July, ColMaj van Hasselt and two squadrons reached Orcha and seized depots full of hay, oats, flour and brandy.

The regiment was granted some rest; but with the divided Russians retreating northwards to Vitebsk and southwards before Mohilev, the Red Lancers' advanced position between them was somewhat delicate, and it was essential to send out daily detachments to scout the neighbourhood for enemy activity. One of these, commanded by Lts van Zuylen and Van Wijchel, was searching the village of Babinovitz on 27 July when – careless in their confidence – they were overrun and captured by Grand Duke Constantine's Imperial Guards Ulan Brigade, losing some 50 lancers in all; only an NCO and three troopers escaped with the news.

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

The regiment had now been joined by the 3rd Reserve Cavalry Corps, and the officers were presented to Gen Grouchy, who congratulated them for their services in the vanguard of the Grande Armée. News had come that Davout had beaten Bagration before Mohilev, and the corps turned northwards. Together they marched towards Babinovitz; soon the regiment got orders to push on for Vitebsk, where a battle with Barclay de Tolly's army seemed imminent. Before they reached Vitebsk the enemy had fallen back, continuing their retreat deeper and deeper into Russia.

Arriving at Vitebsk, the Red Lancers found a detachment of latecomers who had got separated in Vilna and who had marched together with the main force of the Imperial Guard. Yet another reinforcement of 200 lancers – the first detachment of the newly created 5th Sqn, mainly soldiers from the 3rd Dutch Hussars who were still fighting in Spain when the regiment was created – also arrived at Vitebsk. These reinforcements were badly needed; the regiment numbered only about 600 horses – some 400 short of establishment, mainly due to sickness, injury or exhaustion on the march (the only real battle casualties were the 50 lancers lost at Babinovitz). More men had been left behind in regimental depots spaced along the lines of communication.

Spirited impression of a Red Lancer charging. The carbine was not a favourite weapon among the Lancers; when carried slung, as here, it unbalanced the rider to one side and interfered with the handling of the lance, and its constant movement caused injuries to the horse. It is likely that on campaign many men attached them to the saddle, as on Plate E. Note the hooked-up corner of the shabraque; but anachronisms are the crown ornaments on shabraque and valise, the field officer's epaulettes and aiguillettes shown worn by a trooper and – as in so many images – the regiment's white-over-red lance pennon shown reversed. (Collection of Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)

Napoleon sought a decisive confrontation at Smolensk with the now combined forces of Barclay de Tolly and Bagration. From 14 August the Dutch regiment formed, with the Polish Lancers, an independent Imperial Guard Lancer Brigade under the command of Gen Colbert; moving off the road to avoid the crush of troops, this arrived at Smolensk on the 16th when battle was already raging. Although they came under long range fire they were held in reserve throughout the battle; stubborn and skilful Russian resistance cost the French 20,000 casualties, and ended with a successful withdrawal from the blazing city by even the rearguard.

The regiment got on the road for Moscow on 24 August. The Grande Armée was now united in one huge force marching together through the heat and choking dust – eating its way towards the Holy City on a broad front through countryside which the Russians had comprehensively stripped. As part of the vanguard the Red Lancers occasionally got first pick of what little was left.

At Borodino on 5–7 September, Gen Kutusov turned to fight in a desperate attempt to save Moscow. Once more the Imperial Guard were held back, from what became one of the bloodiest battles of the era – a battle without a real victor, which pushed the Russians into a resumed retreat. Kutuzov had to abandon Moscow to its fate, but still had strong forces in being. While the main body marched on towards the capital, Gen Colbert's Lancer Brigade was ordered on 10 September to swing south and cut the road to Kaluga so as to sever communications between

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

'A white-haired NCO, Russian Campaign, 1812' – former JOB collection. As so often, the history of this naive image and its relevance as evidence are unknown. The mixed red and gold aiguillettes and double chevrons – oddly placed – suggest a sergeant-major, but the paired epaulettes are puzzling.

the retreating Kutuzov and the Army of Moldavia. From this moment onwards the Lancer Brigade would act independently as raiders.

Marching through a mixture of woodland and well-cultivated terrain, they found the villages deserted. Sometimes patrols caught peasants fleeing on small carts loaded with bad bread and large numbers of pikes, presumably to arm and feed the serfs. The longer they stayed south of Moscow, without any news of what was happening to the north, the more they encountered swarming parties of Cossacks. Under this increasing pressure, which cost him daily casualties during reconnaissance patrols and skirmishes, and anxious not to get cut off from the main army, Gen Colbert was tormented by the lack of information and instructions. One night they saw a glow on the northern horizon; informed by local civilians that Moscow was said to be in flames, Colbert decided to march towards the capital to find for himself the orders he was awaiting in vain. Shortly after he took this decision a staff officer arrived to up-date him, delivering the order to rejoin the rest of the Guard in Moscow.

The capital was still burning when they arrived on 19 September. Quartered outside the city walls with other Guard units, they enjoyed security, the chance to bake fresh bread, and the coffee, tea, rice, sugar and tobacco which their quartermasters were allowed to fetch out from the city's stores. This tranquillity was short-lived, however: soon the Lancer Brigade received orders to support Marshal Murat's push south to keep the Russians under Gen Kutusov at bay. Manoeuvring around Rakitki, Desna and Gorki they frequently came into conflict with Cossacks. The Red Lancers' regimental strength was now down to some 300 fit horses, but reinforcements were expected – the second half of the 5th Sqn, some 168 troopers with 172 horses, were at Vilna and ready to march for Moscow. On 4 October Gen Lauriston, ADC to the emperor, passed the Red Lancers vanguard on his way to meet the Tsar to negotiate peace terms. In the meantime Kutusov rapidly gained strength, and would soon be able to take the offensive; and the French were having difficulties in keeping their lines of communications open.

Early in October the regiment in the field numbered 48 officers with 145 horses, and 508 troopers with 348 horses. A total of one officer with two horses and 242 lancers with 158 horses were detached at various small depots at Danzig, Königsberg, Vilna and Smolensk; one officer and 56 lancers were in hospital, and three officers and 91 lancers were listed as having been taken prisoner. Other detachments sent from faraway Versailles were still heading towards the regiment across the whole width of Europe.

On 18 October 1812 the armistice that had been honoured while peace talks were taking place was abruptly brought to an end. Kutusov attacked Murat's forces at Vinkovo, inflicting heavy losses and forcing the French to retreat. The next day the French evacuation of the capital began.

The retreat from Moscow

Trying to reach Smolensk by a more southerly route not yet devastated by the Grande Armée, the regiment had to cover the retreat. General Colbert was ordered to burn the bridge across the River Desna on the afternoon of 22 October. However, the continuous flow of soldiers, French citizens who lived in Russia and now followed the retreating army,

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

and thousands of stragglers carrying the most incredible and sometimes useless loot, forced Colbert to delay the bridge's destruction for some hours. He sent out patrols to check the road towards Desna and to burn anything that could be useful to the Russians. When they returned, confirming that the roads were empty at last, Colbert had the bridge burned on the night of 22 October.

The Lancer Brigade rode to Gorki, where they found their comfortable former bivouacs still in good order; then on to Borovsk, crossing the Nara at 4am on 24 October as the last formed unit in the long columns of the retreating army. Colbert received orders to maintain contact with the rearguard while Napoleon's IV Corps under Eugène were fighting their way through Kutusov's blocking force at Malojaroslavetz. The lancers established bivouacs along the main road behind the village of Oevarofskoie. For months they had been marching deep into Russia, but had never been involved in a major battle; the only men the Red Lancers had lost had been to sickness or in small scale actions against the Cossacks. Now, surrounded by deep forests, they would fight their first major engagement. While Kutusov was fighting Napoleon, Gen Platov, the famous Cossack commander, ordered Gen Koeteinikof to take his four regiments through the forest to attack the French rearguard.

On the evening of 24 October the first Cossacks appeared in the fringes of the forest; the next morning their numbers had grown, massing under the eyes of the lancers and of the convoys which still struggled past on the road. General Colbert, outnumbered three or four to one, recognised the danger of being cut off from the rest of the army. He deployed the 1,000 lancers under his command with their right flank in front of the houses of the village where, with 300 to 400 dismounted men of all arms, he laid an ambush commanded by Lt Heshusius of the Red Lancers. The Polish Lancers took position behind the Red Lancers, and behind them the baggage horses, to give a false impression of numbers.

Captain Schneither was sent forward with a detachment of Red Lancers to keep observation, while a second under Lt Verhaegen started skirmishing with their carbines. This situation stayed unchanged until 2pm when the Cossacks came closer; their numbers had now risen to some 3,000-4,000, and Gen Colbert ordered a retreat in echelon, which was made in perfect order. Suddenly 400 or 500 Russians charged Schneither's advanced detachment and surrounded them. As the fight raged Gen Colbert ordered ColMaj Dubois to rescue them with the 2nd Sqn; this force cut a path to their brothers-in-arms, but soon found themselves, in their turn, surrounded by ever-growing numbers of Cossacks. At this point Gen Colbert himself led a charge by the remaining two squadrons, succeeding in throwing back the Cossacks and freeing his encircled lancers. Immediately he ordered a retreat towards their first positions, where the

Fine impression of a lancer pursued by Cossacks, autumn 1812, by the 20th century artist Pierre Benigni. He is shown wearing the lancer cap with a black oilskin cover, the red-collared light blue stable jacket, and dark blue overalls with red embellishments – see Plate E2. This is a good representation of campaign equipment; the lancer carries his overcoat rolled, and the full arsenal of weaponry: lance, slung carbine with bayonet frogged to the sword belt, sabre and two saddle pistols. The shabraque has been removed; the black sheepskin is shown with yellow edging; and note in front of his left foot a strap-hung 'bucket' for the carbine muzzle when it was attached to the left front of the saddle. (Author's collection)

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

A much later but characterful painting of a Red Lancer, 1812, by Maurice Orange, exhibited in 1909. (Collection Alain Chappet, France)

ambush party soon put paid to the Russian pursuit. After two hours of combat the Cossacks withdrew into the woods, still trying to cut the line of communication with Malojaroslavetz. Losses were serious, however: 24 Red Lancers and 30 horses killed or lost and many more wounded. General Colbert knew he could not withstand a second attack, and withdrew towards Borovsk and Marshal Ney's III Corps.

On 26 October the regiment was ordered to join the rest of the Guard. The weather was still mild, but on the 27th the first light snow fell. When they passed the seven-week old field of Borodino they were glad of anything which helped to mask its ghastly spectacle. After a brief pause at Viazma they pressed on; very little food was now to be had, and on 3 November the first serious snow fell, although the days were still bright and frosty. Crossing the Dnieper on 6 November they marched towards Smolensk, where everyone hoped to find food and warm shelter. Marching as flankers to the other Guard units, the Red Lancers reached the 'promised land' on the 9th, and near Smolensk they got some forage and food from a guarded depot. The regiment now mustered some 330 men but with only 130 horses, and were happy to find there the second detachment of the 5th Sqn – some 130 well nourished men and mounts.

The army that had left Moscow with some 95,000 men had already shrunken to 42,000. It was harried by ever bolder Cossacks, and threatened with encirclement by the advancing Russian armies of Gens Kutuzov, Wittgenstein and Tschitchanov from the east, north and south respectively. Pressed from three sides and unable to sit out the winter in Smolensk as they had hoped, Napoleon's army continued to march west under conditions which rapidly became inhuman. In despair, many allowed themselves to be captured; every night hundreds perished from hunger and cold, and when a horse fell from weakness it was sometimes butchered before it was even dead. Marching towards Orcha, the French had to fight a bloody battle at Krasnoï where Kutusov tried once again to cut off their retreat; this action would cost the dwindling army some 6,000 dead, 20,000 captured, and 116 guns, and left the retreating French cut in two, with Ney's III Corps abandoned somewhere in the rear. Napoleon pressed ahead; when the Guard reached Orcha the Red Lancers rested at the Dnieper crossing for two days, and it was Gen Colbert who brought Napoleon the miraculous news that Ney's rearguard had come up.

They left Orcha on 22 November; here the Red Lancers had formed a dismounted battalion under the command of ColMaj van Hasselt, numbering nine officers and 70 lancers, with 44 sick horses and some Russian horses. While the mounted remnant of the regiment accompanied the emperor, this foot unit would stagger on in the rear with other dismounted cavalry, suffering terribly from the conditions and taking casualties in the fighting at the Beresina river.

Approaching the Beresina, the French heard guns in the distance; Gen Tschitchanov's Russians had taken possession of the river crossing at Borisov. Napoleon sent for Gen Colbert, questioning him about the Beresina ford which his lancers had used on 13 July. When the French reached Veselovo near Studianka the engineers constructed two fragile bridges by using materials from the few houses in the neighbourhood, enabling the army to cross the river between 26 and 28 November – an

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

episode which would become famous for extremes of human suffering and heroism.

Still harried by Platov's wolfish bands of Cossacks, those who were able now struggled on to reach Vilna and the Russian/Polish border at Kovno; the closer they came to this safe haven, the more fell victim to starvation and nighttime temperatures that fell to -35°C. On 5 December Napoleon abandoned the ruin of his army and headed for Paris; as his fast sledges departed many of Capt Jan Post's 50 Red Lancers, ordered to guard the first stage of his road home, simply froze to death on the spot. Captain Post had just four troopers left when he reached Vilna on 9 December. That day ColMaj van Hasselt and his dismounted unit – reduced to a third of its original strength – came up with the mounted detachment now led by Lt Verhaegen. On reaching the shelter, food and liquor of Vilna much of the pitiful remnant of the Grande Armée simply fell apart; but not the Imperial Guard. On 13 December the Red Lancers were the last unit of the Guard to cross the border; the regiment had a mounted strength of 20 officers and 40 troopers.

Those who were still fit to serve stayed with the army to hold off the Russians. The others were sent towards the different Guard depots where they would find food, new uniforms and horses. A certain number of officers, NCOs and trumpeters were ordered to return to Versailles where they would try to rebuild the regiment. Their Russian campaign had lasted 171 days; the sabre squadrons had started out with 1,000 lancers and had received 401 reinforcements, reduced by 13 December to a mounted strength of 60; the

Red Lancer saving a *cantinière* during the retreat from Moscow. The elongated style of the *czapska* indicates a painting of a later date, but the dramatic treatment of this tableau suits the countless tragedies that must have occurred during the crossing of the Beresina. (Author's collection)

Red Lancers on parade, in a painting by Hoynck van Papendrecht (1858–1933). This neatly illustrates the 1813 decree ordering that only the first rank would carry the lance, the second (and all NCOs) being armed with carbines. On the left is a trumpeter in white and red full dress. The lance pennons, again, are wrongly depicted as red over white. (Collection of Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

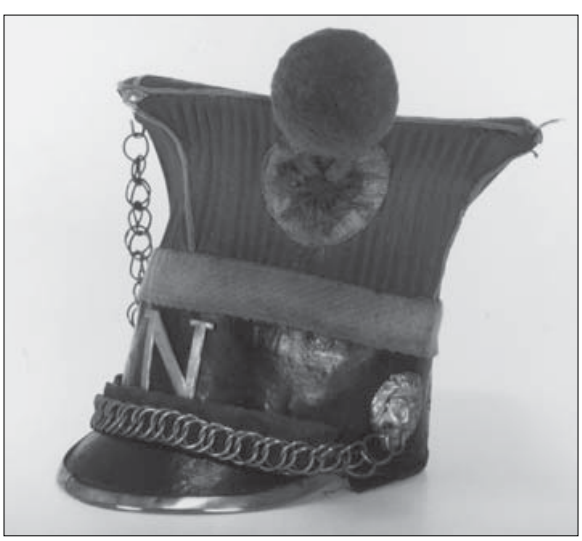
campaign had cost them 1,341 horses. The nominal rolls of the regiment's officers and men contain long columns of names marked 'captured', 'missing (frostbite)', or more often simply 'fell behind'… Of the 58 proud young vélites who followed the regiment into Russia, 47 would never return home. The heroic ColMaj Jan van Hasselt would die of exhaustion at Elbing on 29 December.

THE 1813 CAMPAIGN

With Napoleon back on his throne in Paris, he knew the war was far from over. It was the first time that a single campaign had not brought him victory and peace; now the Russians and the defecting Prussians were threatening the other German vassal states. The spell of Napoleon's invincibility was broken, and his eastern frontiers were faced by 100,000 enemies. He had to build a completely new conscript army, and his lack of cavalry was particularly acute.

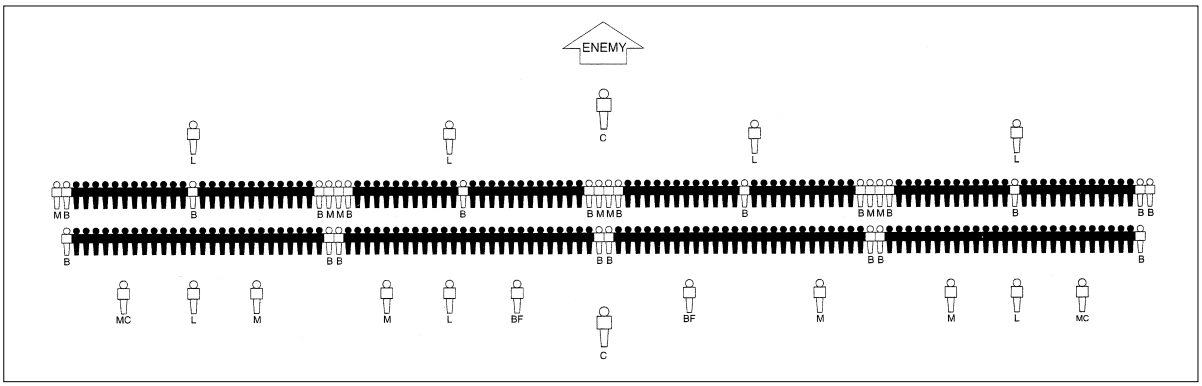
Versailles had become a very busy place. Conscripts arrived from all parts of the empire, and the reborn Red Lancers would now largely lose their Dutch character, although built around the armature of 50 veteran officers and NCOs who were fit for service after returning from Russia. On 6 January 1813 the regiment was short of 674 men; but 12 days later Napoleon decreed that it was to be brought up to a strength of eight squadrons instead of the former five, to number 2,000 men. A month later, on 23 February, yet another decree superceded this order, this time increasing the regimental establishment to ten squadrons. Its 2,500 men would be divided between two units of five squadrons each, the last five squadrons serving as part of the Young Guard. To distinguish them from the five senior Old Guard squadrons these would receive uniforms in reversed colours – dark blue with red facings; their czapska would not bear a helmet plate but a simple, uncrowned brass 'N' on the front.

As soon as new squadrons were ready to march they were put on the road towards the army assembling in Germany. Numbers were growing, but the quality of the men was mediocre, their uniforms makeshift and their training superficial; they were supposed to receive much of their instruction while actually on the road into Germany – a process which drove the officers distracted. In late April 1813 the Red Lancers in the field numbered 706 lancers with 706 horses; another 138 with 140 horses were on detachment, and 727 lancers were on their way towards Frankfurt. The organisation of squadrons had been changed, reflecting the desperate shortage of seasoned NCOs: each still consisted of two companies, but each of these now had an establishment of four officers, a sergeant-major, four sergeants, a quartermaster-corporal, eight corporals, two farriers, three trumpeters, and 105 troopers. A change of armament had also been ordered; there had been little time to train raw men with the lance, and this would now be carried only by those troopers who formed the first of the



***Czapska* of the Young Guard – the squadrons numbered 6 to 10 in the rebuilt and much enlarged regiment of 1813–14. The difference from the senior squadrons was the plain brass 'N' replacing the sunray cap plate. Although the uniform colours were reversed, the crown of the lance cap remained scarlet. The wool pompon on this cap has faded to an indeterminate shade, though the band and piping retain their yellow colour. The large cockade is white, red and blue reading inwards to the centre. Note the lion-mask rosette for the chin chain, which replaced an original Medusa pattern. (Collection of Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)**

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com



Composition of a squadron in battle formation from April 1813. C = *capitaine*, L = *lieutenant* or *sous-lieutenant*, MC = *maréchal-des-logis-chef* (sergeant-major), M = *maréchal-des-logis* (sergeant), BF = *brigadier-fourrier* (quartermaster), B = *brigadier* (corporal). Only the troopers in the first rank now carried lances, the second rank being armed with carbines and sabres only. Corporals handed in their lances from 4 March 1813.

regiment's two ranks when drawn up for battle. The second rank, and all NCOs including corporals, would now carry only sabre, carbine and saddle pistols (when the latter could be obtained – they too were in short supply).

* * *

In April 1813 Napoleon set off with some 200,000 mostly green troops to link up with Eugène's 68,000-strong Army of the Elbe. He crossed the Saale on 30 April, and on 1 May was moving towards Lützen and Leipzig. His lack of cavalry denied him information on the enemy's movements, and the Allies' divided command left them just as confused; the two armies groped their way blindfold into the battle of Lützen on 2 May, but the emperor broke the Allies with concentrated artillery fire. Marching on towards Dresden, he caught the enemy again at Bautzen on 20 May. General Colbert's Lancer Brigade performed here with distinction, and on the 21st when fighting continued at Würschen. To prevent the Allies from re-forming, the next day the emperor ordered Gen Walther to pursue them and harass their retreat across Silesia.

The Guard cavalry quickly got on the road heading for Reichenbach, situated in the foothills bordering the River Neisse, where Colbert's brigade formed the vanguard of Gen Lefebvre-Desnoëttes' light cavalry. After a two-hour march they ran into Cossacks in the neighbourhood of Weissenberg, where the bridge had been destroyed. The lancers crossed the Löbauerwasser on a raft ferry north of the town and drove the Cossacks back in a running fight. Further on their way was barred by a ravine, which extended far to the right, and to the left up to the village of Reichenbach, where Russian artillery was emplaced and protected by other troops. Russian Dragoons soon supported the retreating Cossacks, and Colbert's position became untenable; his brigade was still ferrying across the river and he only had six squadrons at his disposal. However, the order to press the enemy into a retreat forced him to charge the superior numbers of enemy cavalry, which fell back towards the shelter of their artillery. While the arriving squadrons formed a second line, the Red Lancers charged; counter-charged in their turn, they fell back to re-form under the protection of the fresh squadrons now coming up. This unequal battle lasted for two hours before the other Guard cavalry regiments – who had until then been spectators – intervened; in co-operation with Gen Latour-Maubourg's Cavalry Corps they forced the enemy to retreat. The price of this unequal battle to the Red Lancers was high: four officers, 197 lancers and 199 horses were lost. One of

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Trumpet banner found near the body of Trumpet-Major Kauffman of the Red Lancers on the field of Reichenbach, 22 May 1813, and later lodged in the museum at Görlitz. Its colours are reconstructed in Plate F1. (Author's collection)

the killed was Trumpet-Major Kauffman, whose trumpet banner would later end up in the Görlitz museum (see left).

With the Allies in full retreat, the Spring Campaign had shown Napoleon's genius undiminished; but his weakness in experienced cavalry prevented him from exploiting his victories, and his army was overstretched on a front extending from Hamburg all the way to the border of Austria (which was still officially neutral, but was secretly negotiating with the Allies). The emperor needed time to build up his strength; but time was on the side of the Allies, who had been pushed onto the defensive but who would become ever stronger in numbers. An armistice was signed on 4 June, and Napoleon and his Guard returned to Dresden.

On 26 June 1813 the Red Lancers listed 50 officers with 143 horses, and 1,058 lancers with 982 horses; one officer and 35 lancers with 47 horses were on detachment; two officers were serving as ADCs; 53 lancers were in hospital; and three lancers were under arrest awaiting trial. The regiment also numbered three medical officers; three drivers for the packhorses; in the regimental train, four soldiers, four draught horses and two field forges. Elsewhere there were 11 officers with 38 horses and 403 lancers with 359 horses at Frankfurt; ten lancers with 11 horses at Glogau; and two lancers with two horses were still 'in the rear'. The number lost as prisoners of war was now listed as three officers and 78 lancers.

The armistice would come to an end on 15 August; so the emperor ordered the celebration of his birthday brought forward to 10 August. The festivities were magnificent; accompanied by the King of Saxony and a glittering staff, Napoleon inspected 15,000 men of his Guard during a huge parade at Friedrichstadt. The whole regiment was present except for a few hundred who were guarding the Bohemian border.

Two days later the Austrians formally declared war on France, and on the 16th Marshal Blücher's Russo-Prussian Army of Silesia began hostilities against the troops of Marshal Ney. Although fought against odds of two to one, the rainswept battle of Dresden on 26–27 August would be a brilliant victory in the old Napoleonic style; on the second day the Red Lancers successfully charged the Austrian corps of Gen Gyulai. In the two weeks up to that date the regiment had lost 200 horses and a considerable number of lancers, but a stream of replacements kept its numbers up.

Now began a confusing period of marches and counter-marches; the marshals were beaten one by one, but the Allies avoided a direct engagement with the emperor. The Red Lancers fought a stiff action at Töplitz on 17 September, smashing through Russian hussars to overrun a battery, at a cost of more than 50 casualties. Unable to control the situation, Napoleon ordered that the wounded and all cavalry depots should retreat towards Erfurt and Gotha. The Red Lancers now

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

***Chef d'escadron* Jan Post (1778–1841). In October 1813 he was one of only three survivors of his squadron to escape from Leipzig by swimming the river when they were cut off from the retreating army. This magnificent portrait by Louis Moritz shows all the details of an officer's uniform. Red leather shows along the edges of the pouch and sword belts, the latter with six stripes of gold lace; the Imperial eagle motif on the brass plate is silvered, as are the eagle and the 'N' on the pouch belt, which has gold lace facing and gilt shield and chains. The pouch itself has a gilt metal flap with a silvered Imperial eagle badge. The chin chain is of triple interlinked gilt rings on a red leather strap. (Private collection)**

numbered some 1,000 men with the army and had another 1,000 at Frankfurt and Torgau.

Leipzig had become the pivot for the manoeuvres of all the armies in the field; and from 16 to 19 October it was the site of the huge, confused 'Battle of the Nations', which cost each side some 60,000 casualties. The regiment lost many officers and men to enemy artillery fire, during which Gen Colbert's orderly, one of the few surviving Dutch soldiers, lost both legs. The French retreat to the west bank of the Elster started in good order but turned into a panic flight, and the only bridge blew up while some 15,000 to 20,000 French troops were still in Leipzig city. Among the trapped was the wounded Chef d'escadron Jan Post of the Red Lancers; he escaped by swimming the river, but only a sergeant and one lancer were able to follow him, the rest of his squadron being killed, captured or drowned.

The mauled army marched west towards France, skirmishing against Cossacks as they went. Bavaria had now joined the Allies, and Gen de Wrede took some 40,000 men to block the road at Hanau. On 30 October, with the French border beckoning ahead of them, Napoleon's troops slaughtered their way through the blockade; that day the lancers were glad to charge, to get out of the woods where they were sitting under cannon fire. By the time they reached Frankfurt with the emperor two days later the regiment's strength was down to 52 officers with 130 horses, and 462 lancers with 464 horses; but at the Versailles depot another 1,400-odd recruits were waiting to reinforce them (though only about a third of them mounted). Three officers and 250 lancers were listed as prisoners of war in the aftermath of Leipzig. Guarding the Rhine crossings at Mainz, Gen Colbert and Capt AdjMaj de Stuers tried to gather the regiment's stragglers. The Red Lancers arrived at Worms on 8 November 1813, after a campaign which had started with bright victories but which ended with the French driven back to defend their eastern frontier as they had done in 1792. Once more, the regiment would have to be rebuilt.

THE 1814 CAMPAIGN

One of the results of the defeat at Leipzig was a widespread national uprising against the French in Holland, accompanied by Gen von Bülow's Allied invasion from the east. The French Gen Molitor had to evacuate Amsterdam on 14 November, retreating towards Utrecht, Bergen-op-Zoom and Gorkum. At The Hague the provisional government proclaimed the exiled Prince of Orange as future sovereign.[1] A French Army of Holland had to be organised in Brussels, with the intention of marching towards Gorkum to hold back the Allies at the

1 See MAA 371, *Wellington's Dutch Allies 1815*

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Captain Fortuné de Brack (1789–1850), ADC to Gen Colbert in Russia, was subsequently admitted to the regiment in 1813. Painted in 1815, this miniature shows nicely the dandyism of fashionable officers in Napoleon's armies. De Brack left a vivid account of the part played by the Red Lancers during the Waterloo campaign; he was also the author of an influential light cavalry manual.

River Waal. General Decaen, commander of the French troops, had to make contact with those of Marshal Macdonald who were defending the Rhine.

From late November 1813 a Guard Reserve Corps was assembled in Belgium. From late December a detachment of 41 officers and 874 troopers of the Red Lancers with 892 horses arrived to join them. These men were all drawn from the Young Guard squadrons numbered from 6 to 10; they were commanded by GenMaj Baron d'Audenarde, assisted by experienced regimental officers such as De Briqueville, Coti, De Brack and Duranty. Although the rankers were now of mixed origin, the regiment still had a large number of Dutch-born officers who had served since the beginning. As most of France's vassal nations fell away, their soldiers still serving in Napoleon's ranks were disarmed and send off either to their own countries or to special garrisons. The Dutch officers of the Red Lancers, seeing their country in revolt against French power but linked to the emperor by oath, asked Gen Colbert to intervene, asking that the emperor not send them to Belgium where they would probably have to fight their own countrymen. Colbert declared that his Dutch officers would continue serving the emperor with zeal, and thus avoided their being dismissed to some humiliating posting under suspicion of disloyalty.

While the regiment was re-forming at Versailles, the Young Guard units were already engaged near Antwerp. At Hoogstraten on 11 January 1814, Chef d'escadron de Briqueville led only 18 lancers in a charge which captured a Prussian unit and a cannon. Fearing an unavoidable encirclement of Antwerp, Gen Maison, commander of I Corps defending the northern borders of the Empire, chose to defend this region by mobile operations; he left the great port defended by a garrison of sailors, National Guards, Line infantry and some Imperial Guard units – detachments of Red Lancers, Mounted Chasseurs and Guards of Honour.[2]

Unable to hold Liège and Hasselt, the troops retired towards Brussels where Gen Maison had his headquarters. (One of the strategic points the Red Lancers occupied was the crossroads near the obscure village of Mont St Jean; 18 months later the commanding officer would recall this position when he participated in the final drama of Napoleon's career.)

In late January the French even had to abandon Brussels and retired into the stronghold of Lille, from where Gen Maison would organise a successful mobile campaign against the advancing Allies.

In France, meanwhile, the hugely outnumbered Napoleon would show his strategic capabilities at their most dazzling, sometimes forcing the separated Allied armies into retreat or leading them into dangerous positions; but bravery, lightning marches and counter-marches were not enough to save his Empire. During these weeks the Red Lancers were commanded by Chef d'escadron de Tiecken, one of the longest serving senior officers in the regiment. Weakened by sickness and casualties, the regiment received some replacements from the former Spanish Royal Guard of Napoleon's eldest brother Joseph, and from the regiments of Guards of Honour.

(continued on page 33)

2 See MAA 378, *Napoleon's Guards of Honour*

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

A

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

1: Officer, early regimental uniform, 1811
2: Officer, parade dress, 1811–14
3: Officer, full dress, 1811–14

B

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

D

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

1 & 2: Lancers, campaign dress, Russia 1812
3: Lancer, campaign dress, 1811–14

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

1: Trumpet-major, full dress, pre-1813
2: Trumpeter, full dress, pre-1813
3: Trumpeter, full dress, 1813–14

F

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

1: Trumpeter, undress, 1813–14
2: Trumpeter, campaign dress, 1811–14
3: Trumpeter, campaign dress, Russia 1812

G

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

1: Lancer of Young Guard Squadrons, full dress, 1813–14
2: NCO of Young Guard Squadrons, 1813–14
3: Lancer of Young Guard Squadrons, overcoat, 1813–14
2
3
1
P. Courcelle

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

As the overwhelming Allied armies closed in on Paris, Versailles was threatened; at the regimental depot ColMaj Dubois ordered the garrison to leave the city, following the empress towards Châteaudun, Tours and Angers. Napoleon's hopes for a last battle before the city walls of Paris were dashed when Marshal Marmont defected by marching his ignorant troops behind enemy lines. Abdicating at Fontainebleau, where he was still protected by his faithful Imperial Guard, the emperor left for exile on the isle of Elba in April 1814.

THE FIRST RESTORATION

Seeing the Imperial star fading, some officers and NCOs of Dutch origin had already made their separate peace and slipped away; with the abdication came orders for all foreign soldiers to return to their homelands. With a few exceptions, most of the Dutch officers left for Holland where they entered the newly raised army of the Prince of Orange. The new King Louis XVIII returned from English exile to Calais, whence he was accompanied by the Red Lancers of the Young Guard towards Paris; but more than one trooper left the ranks without permission.

A sergeant-major of the Red Lancers in marching order, by Louis Vallet (1856– ?). The typical appearance of a lancer on campaign, essentially as our Plate E3, though here retaining the epaulette and aiguilettes of his senior rank. (Collection of Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)

Corps Royal des Chevau-légers Lanciers de France

One of the first steps taken by the restored Bourbon government was to reduce the strength of the army, and of the Imperial Guard in particular. The Old Guard became the 'Royal Corps of France'; and thus the Red Lancers became the Corps Royal des Chevau-légers Lanciers deFrance. The regiment would consist of four squadrons of two companies each, totalling 42 officers and 601 rankers. A fifth or supernumerary squadron gathered all the officers, NCOs and troopers who had not yet been assigned to other posts. In early June 1814 the regiment still numbered 1,300 men of which 500 were Young Guard; the latter were transferred to Line lancer regiments, but two thirds deserted before reaching their new units. Of the former Guards of Honour, 153 resigned and just nine stayed in the regiment. Eighty surviving Dutch lancers returned to Holland, leaving some 600 men to form the new unit. General Colbert took advantage of the reorganisation to get rid of some mediocre officers, but disobeyed government instructions in order to keep a few good ones who were of Dutch, Belgian or German origin.

On 5 July, the entire Corps was invited to present itself to the Duchess of Angoulême who was visiting the Royalist province of the Vendee. Surrounded by some 6,000 participants all wearing large white Bourbon ribbons, their first encounter with royalty was not destined to

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

be a success. Vexed by the arrogant attitude of the duchess, the Corps left the next day for their garrison.

On 2 August the reorganisation of the new Corps began under the supervision of Inspector of Reviews J.B.Patzius and Marshal Ney. This operation kept, or promoted, 24 officers, and another six would serve in the supernumerary 5th Squadron. Ten officers left the unit, transferring to other posts or going on half-pay or pension; the Corps thus lacked, for its four sabre squadrons, 18 officers, and another five for the supernumerary squadron. As for the rankers, some 138 troopers were sent home; with 437 troopers and NCOs remaining the unit was some 164 men short of establishment – the 5th Sqn had 45 men. Uniforms and equipment were in a bad state and needed to be renewed. Initially the Corps were stationed at Angers, but they left this city on 5 September 1814 to march towards their new garrison town of Orleans, where they arrived on 14 September.

In May 1814, the new white flags with gold embroidered lilies had been introduced to replace the glorious tricolour and eagle. Orders were given to burn the Imperial regimental flags; but as late as 23 August, Gen Bordessoulle had to press Gen Colbert into obeying, and to send the Eagle to the Ministry of War for destruction. On 30 December of that year the Corps Royal des Chevau-légers Lanciers de France received their new banner.

Another uncomfortable incident would distance the officers even more from the Bourbon cause. On 27 February 1815 the Duke and Duchess of Angoulême, on their way towards the south of France, stopped for 24 hours at Orleans. General Colbert, proud to have a fine, well-dressed officer corps of tall and handsome men, was allowed to present them to the royal party. The duchess walked towards them, examined them and talked to some of the officers. After allowing the officers to make a semi-circle around her, she addressed Gen Colbert in an emphatic tone: 'General, your officers certainly look fine, but this is not enough; they also need to be good!' At which Colbert replied, 'Madame, until today they have been everything that you could wish; and I dare assure you that they will always be just as they have been'. The duke awarded the Order of St Louis and Legion of Honour to several officers and troopers; this was typical of the futile attempts to bind the

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

OPPOSITE

Portrait of Gen Dubois by the vélite Alexandre-Jean Dubois who served in his regiment. Colonel-Major Charles Dubois passed from the Dutch Royal Guard Hussars into the Red Lancers as second in command. His only campaign with them was in Russia; thereafter he commanded the depot at Versailles. The original portrait of June 1813 was altered to add later decorations the following June; and again in November 1814, to this state. Under the restored monarchy Dubois was appointed 'camp marshal', so the painter had to add to his regimental uniform the distinctions of his army rank of *général de brigade:* the blue and gold sash with two silver stars above the tassels, and gold oakleaf embroidery on collar, cuff and breast. At the same time the Imperial motifs were changed to royal emblems. (Château d'Ecaussines-Lalaing, Belgium)

In the corner of Gen Dubois' portrait we see a self-portrait of the artist Alexandre-Jean Dubois, later known as Dubois-Drahonet (1790–1834). This talented painter made portraits of a number of Red Lancer officers while serving at the Versailles depot in 1813–14, and was probably excused regimental duties to allow him to do so – he set up his studio in the town. The 22-year-old officer aspirant became a sergeant on 1 March 1813 – very rapid promotion; at the extreme bottom left, left of the scabbard, can just be made out the tip of his single gold rank chevron emerging from his glove. The most interesting detail is the mixed colours of his aiguillettes – these are definitely shown as yellow, red and blue. (Château d'Ecaussines-Lalaing, Belgium)

former Guard to the Bourbon cause – the number of crosses of the Legion of Honour distributed during the Restoration was so high that its worth was seen to be devalued.

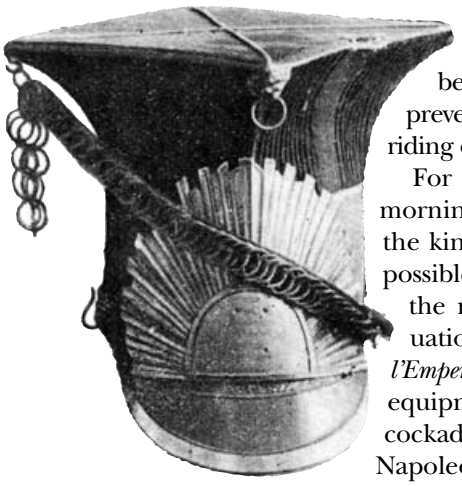
1815: THE HUNDRED DAYS

At Orleans life was a good deal more peaceful than it had been for the past three years. The officers went to the theatre and attended balls in their knee breeches and silk stockings, the épée and bicorn hat replacing the sabre and czapska. This easy life was disturbed with a suddenness that nobody could have foreseen when, on 9 March 1815, the newspapers reported Napoleon's landing at Fréjus on the 1st of that month. He was marching at great speed towards Lyon. Now they understood why Col Bugeaud's 14th Line Infantry regiment had been sent rushing off to Besançon. Within a few days they would learn that most troops sent to stop Napoleon's march towards Paris had thrown away their white Bourbon cockades to replace them with the tricolour once again.

The soldiers of the Corps Royal des Lanciers de France were ordered to keep to their barracks, with the excuse that the order to march could arrive at any moment. The officers of the regiment were invited to spend as much time as possible with the soldiers and to listen to what they had to say regarding Napoleon's return. The soldiers of the former Imperial Guard had been willing to serve the Bourbon King Louis XVIII, but in the months since his restoration they had grumbled about their treatment. The king never kept his promises to recognise their ranks and privileges; instead, obviously distrusted, they had been sent away from Paris and, what was worse, the new government had reduced their pay by a third. The soldiers had little sympathy for the Bourbons and even less enthusiasm for the idea of fighting their brothers-in-arms who were marching with their former emperor towards the capital. All ranks of the Lancers followed news of Napoleon's progress with interest. The officers, however, out of respect for their General Colbert, did not forget the oath that tied them to the king.

On 13 March Gen Dupont (the man of Baylen) ordered Gen Pajol to send the cavalry towards Pithiviers to join the corps that the Duke of Berry, with the king's household troops, was organising between Melun and Paris. The lancer squadrons left Orleans on the 14th and arrived at Pithiviers two days later. The regimental depot, commanded by ColMaj Dubois, stayed in Orleans; the troops there were starting to show signs of unrest, and some were imprisoned, but most of the garrison stayed calm and awaited events. Meanwhile the Duke of Berry, marching towards Fontainebleau, learned that the troops guarding Lyon had evacuated the town or had joined Napoleon's ever growing force. Their commander, the brother of the king, had returned to Paris, leaving Lyon unguarded against Napoleon's entry on 10 March. These were strange times: regions, provinces, towns, families and friends were divided over which side to choose. General Colbert was contacted by a disuised Gendarme, who took from his snuffbox a letter signed by Gen Bertrand, Napoleon's former Grand Marshal of the Palace. This piece of paper invited Colbert to cross over and join Napoleon, who had entered

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com



The lancer cap worn by Captain Pierre Soufflot de Magny (1793–1893) at Waterloo. Upon Napoleon's return in 1815 all Bourbon royal emblems were removed from the uniforms and equipment. The *czapska* plate showed three lilies; with no time to replace them with the crowned 'N', Soufflot left the space empty. Soufflot would live into his hundredth year, the senior surviving member of the Legion of Honour. (Author's collection)

Auxerre on 17 March; it also informed him that Napoleon was surprised not to have seen Colbert and his regiment marching beside him. The general had the envoy arrested, but could not prevent some 50 of his men, led by Sous-lieutenants Fonnade and Réautey, riding off towards Paris to join the Bonapartist forces.

For the Bourbons things simply fell apart; orders given in the morning were contradicted by nightfall. The royalist cause was lost, and the king had to flee. General Colbert had tried to stay loyal as long as possible; now, with the emperor back on his throne in Paris, he gathered the regiment and brought them up to date about the political situation in the capital. The soldiers' response was to shout *'Vive l'Empereur!'* and to start replacing the Bourbon emblems on their equipment and uniforms with Imperial ones. The secretly kept tricolour cockades, eagles and 'Ns' quickly displaced the royal lilies. On 21 March, Napoleon summoned Colbert with his regiment to Paris, where they arrived on the 23rd. The next day Napoleon inspected them at the Tuileries, together with the other Guard regiments. However, Colbert's cautious behaviour during the critical days of Napoleon's return had been noted. To show his loyalty towards the emperor the general rode to Paris ahead of his regiment, arriving at the Place du Carousel where Napoleon was inspecting his troops. When Colbert joined the officers attending the parade he was noticed, and the emperor approached him:

'Ahah! There you are, General Colbert; you are arriving quite late!'

'Sire, I could come no sooner.'

'Come!' jeered Napoleon, taking hold of the general's moustache; 'You're late – what kept you?'

'Sire, not as late as Your Majesty – I have been waiting for you for a year.' These words would weigh heavily against Colbert after the Second Restoration.

All the Imperial Guard regiments returned to their former garrisons. The depot left at Orleans, consisting of some 300 men and horses under the command of Charles Dubois, returned to Versailles with the regiment. The universal European hostility towards Napoleon obliged him to recall all men on half-pay to the army and to mobilise the National Guard. The Imperial Guard was re-instituted by decree on 21 March, but its organisation was decreed on 8 April. The single reborn regiment of Light Horse Lancers of the Imperial Guard were to have 828 men with 869 horses, and were made part of LtGen Lefebvre-Desnoëttes' Imperial Guard Light Cavalry Brigade alongside Col Lallemand's Mounted Chasseurs.

Many former soldiers, NCOs and officers returned to the regiment. Colbert informed the emperor that he was receiving every day veterans coming from Poland and the territories of the former Confederation of the Rhine. But Napoleon was firm; he did not want foreigners in his army, with the sole exception of Poles. These were organised into one squadron of the Guard Lancers, formed around the backbone of those soldiers of the now disbanded Polish Lancers who had followed Napoleon into exile. On the other hand, the regiment had lost some officers who would not serve under Napoleon.

On 10 April the regimental strength was 53 officers and 621 troopers, with 538 horses. Four days later a decree nominated 59 officers of whom nine would serve as supernumeraries. Lieutenant General

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Colbert still commanded the regiment, with two majors at his side: Dubois, and Jerzmanowski, commander of the Polish squadron. The four squadron leaders included the veterans De Tiecken (a Belgian) and Coti (a Corsican), both veterans from the earliest days of the Red Lancers; Coti would soon die from wounds and exhaustion and be replaced by De Stuers, also a Dutch veteran from the beginning. Most of the other officers had served in the regiment during the campaigns of 1813 and 1814. On 1 May they would number 60, and 65 one month later, at the head of 1,181 men with 739 horses. On 2 April the Imperial Guard gave an immense banquet for the various troops stationed in Paris, with tables set out on the Champ de Mars. The Red Lancers were dissatisfied with their supplier, the restaurant keeper M.Guillot, who only delivered half of what they had ordered so that five of their tables were left empty; nevertheless, their enthusiasm did not suffer noticeably.

From late April each Guard cavalry regiment had to provide a detachment of five officers and 115 men for escort service to the emperor, to be rotated every 24 hours. Those of the Red Lancers and Mounted Chasseurs had to march towards Compiègne. At around this time Napoleon ordered Gen Bertrand to send a part of his Household, with his campaign furniture plus horses, coaches, tents and everything else needed for operations in the field, to arrive at the same town on 1 May.

During May the emperor inspected the Red Lancers every eight days, on Sunday 7, 14 and 28 May.

With foreign troops gathering slowly on the borders of France, Napoleon wanted to take the initiative, preferably before Russian troops were ready to intervene. On 3 June he ordered Gen Drouot to send the Imperial Guard towards Soissons, leaving on 5, 6 and 7 June so that they would all be united on 10 June. The Red Lancers had to leave on the 6th together with other Guard units, forming a column of some 1,600 horsemen. When the regiment left its garrison it counted 1,253 men and 955 horses, but due to the lack of equipment it was impossible to have more than 700 or 800 men mounted for campaigning. The Army of the North concentrated around Beaumont; and on 15 June they crossed the border into Belgium.

***Chef d'escadron* Hubert J.J.L. de Stuers (1789–1861) served as a courier for Gen Colbert in Russia, and became the general's most trusted officer. It is his unpublished notes on the 1815 campaign that have revealed that Napoleon did not in fact sleep at Le Caillou the night before Waterloo. (Author's collection)**

Quatre-Bras

The Guard cavalry received order to leave at 8am and to follow the army. Marching fast on bad roads the army's component parts got intermixed; but they formed up on a plain some 1½ miles short of Charleroi, pushing Prussian cavalry patrols in front of them. Expecting the Prussians to fight, the only action they had to undertake was a charge by the Guard duty squadrons led by Gen Letort, who was killed with a number of his men. Around 2pm the French crossed the River Sambre and took Charleroi without resistance; the army then divided, the corps taking different directions. Marshal Ney took command of the left wing and was ordered to march towards Quatre-Bras and Brussels. To

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Colbert at Waterloo, by Alphonse Lalauze. Shot at Quatre-Bras on 16 June, the general led his regiment with his left arm in a sling. (Author's collection)

strengthen his corps the emperor attached Gen Lefebvre-Desnoëttes' Guard Light Cavalry brigade and six Guard guns to his forces – though with instructions to go easy on them.

At around 4pm on the 15th the Guard Light Cavalry and their six cannon were sent towards Frasnes, taking to the fields to pass the Line infantry and cavalry columns quickly. With the Lancers leading they arrived in front of Frasnes around 6.30pm. Skirmishing lancers surprised an NCO and some men from the 2nd Bn, 2nd Nassau-Usingen Regt guarding the entrance to the town; the NCO, a veteran of the Spanish campaign, had mistaken the red-uniformed riders for English cavalry. Pushed back, only a few of the Nassauers got away unharmed and joined the rest of their regiment, commanded by Maj Normann, who retreated north from Frasnes. The enemy seemed to consist of only a few infantry battalions and some artillery. Even this estimate was overgenerous: in fact they only had three Nassau infantry companies and one volunteer company with six light guns to defend the road towards the crossroads of Quatre-Bras. There the Netherlands army, informed about Ney's movements on the Brussels road, gathered around the Duke of Saxe-Weimar's brigade which was already in the neighbourhood.

With the Red Lancers standing alone north of Frasnes, and the rest of the Guard Light Cavalry and their battery one mile behind, Gen Colbert informed his superior that he would try to hustle the enemy backwards from the strategic crossroads. Uncertain of the enemy's strength, he divided his regiment into three groups, one detachment on the main road and one each side of it. The Poles commanded by Jerzmanowski charged the Nassau infantry, but were held at bay by their artillery, which killed and wounded several Polish soldiers. They were ordered to halt and only to guard the village of Frasnes, where they established several posts.

The next morning, 16 June, Napoleon had the entire Prussian army in front of him some miles to the east at Ligny. In the meantime the Allies had strengthened their positions at Quatre-Bras, and Wellington's troops were arriving there piecemeal by forced marches; from the south Marshal Ney, too, was pressing forward with 8,000 to 10,000 men of all arms. At around 10am skirmishing commenced, and by 2pm reinforcements had arrived on the battlefield. The Red Lancers were kept in reserve to the left of the main road, and could only watch the fine cavalry charges of Kellermann's Cuirassiers. At nightfall, after many casualties on both sides but without having shifted the Allies' grip on the crossroads, the troops retreated towards their first positions, with

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

The last charge: lithograph by Raffet (1804–60). Fortuné de Brack later wrote that the regiment made five separate charges on the Allied squares and batteries. He did not believe claims that other units had broken a square, and paid handsome compliments to the intelligent deployment, coolness and fire discipline of the British infantry. (Collection of Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)

the Red Lancers bivouacking around Frasnes. Without any direct involvement the regiment had still lost some 50 men, and Colbert had been wounded in the left arm. Meanwhile, off to the east Napoleon had beaten the Prussians at Ligny, where some Lancers were wounded during the cavalry charge of the combined duty squadrons.

On 17 June, having sent Marshal Grouchy with Gens Vandamme's and Exelmans' corps to follow the Prussians north in the direction of Wavre, the emperor marched west towards Quatre-Bras. By then the Allies, aware of what had happened at Ligny and afraid to be outflanked, had begun their own parallel retreat northwards in the direction of Brussels.

The French 7th Hussars commanded by Col Marbot, acting as vanguard of the emperor's main force, were sent towards Frasnes in order to make contact with Ney's corps. With the Red Lancers guarding Ney's right flank, the Hussars too mistook the Lancers' red uniforms for British, and fired upon them.

Uniting his forces, Napoleon now followed the Allies under Wellington up the Brussels road through a thunderstorm and lashing rain which transformed the fields each side of the narrow paved highway into muddy pools. The Allied rearguard cavalry skilfully held their pursuers back, and as evening approached Wellington's army halted and bivouacked along the slight east-west rise at Mont St Jean just short of the village of Waterloo. At around 5pm the Guard Light Cavalry brigade arrived in front of the hamlet called Maison-du-Roi, behind which was the farm of Le Caillou where the emperor established his headquarters and where he retired to bed. However, with the entire French army passing by the windows which overlooked the main road, Napoleon was unable to sleep from the noise made by the cavalry, marching soldiers, baggage and guns thundering over the cobbles. He therefore moved during the night to the farm of Vieux Manon, some yards from Le Caillou, to find some rest.[3] The Light Cavalry brigade had to stay under

3 This interesting detail comes from the unpublished memoirs of Chef d'Esc & AdjMaj Hubert de Stuers of the Red Lancers. A Dutchman by birth, he was a close friend of LtCol J.C.Duuring of the 1st Foot Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard, commanding officer of the battalion which guarded Le Caillou that night. His brother Lambert de Stuers was also present at Waterloo with the 2nd Foot Chasseurs of the Guard – a triple connection which would seem to confirm the accuracy of Hubert's diaries. Napoleon had been accustomed to sleep on the battlefield, but the Napoleon of 1815 was not the man he had been.

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

***Chef d'escadron* M.M.B.de Tiecken, a veteran regimental officer who led a squadron in the Hundred Days, portrayed in the later uniform of a senior officer of the Dutch Lancer Regiment No.10, organised in 1819 by Gen Dubois, former colonel-major of the Red Lancers. Apart from the colours the new regiment wore uniforms closely modelled on those of the Red Lancers. (Collection of Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)**

arms for another two hours before they could spread out around the farm in the hope of finding a dry spot to sleep. Napoleon's army was concentrating between Plancenoit in the east and Mon-Plaisir farm to the west, facing the Allies on the slight plateau of Mont St Jean. The night was terrible for both armies, lacking food, clean water, shelter or dry firewood, and under a heavy rain which persisted most of the night.

Waterloo

On the morning of 18 June the French army's deployment for battle was much delayed by the soaked state of the ground. This was heavy agricultural land; rain, and the passage of horses and vehicles turned it into deep mud which sucked off men's shoes and bogged down the cannon. It was not long before midday when the battle opened, with the advance of Jerome's Corps towards Hougoumont on the French left flank. The general development of the battle is too well known to need repeating here.

The Imperial Guard was drawn up in reserve behind the French centre. After the charge of the British Union and Household brigades, which reached the artillery lines of the I Corps, Lefebvre-Desnoëttes' brigade advanced and took position in front of the batteries. Napoleon, guarded by his duty squadrons (to which the Red Lancers contributed part), moved during the battle to three different positions. In the morning he stayed near Rossomme farm; at around 3pm he was near the De Coster house; and at about 7pm in the evening he was between La Belle Alliance and La Haye Sainte.

It was close to 3.30pm when he ordered Marshal Ney to renew the attacks in the centre. Perhaps an hour and a half later the cavalry of the Guard went to the left of the main Brussels road, between La Haye Sainte and Hougoumont, where they sheltered from the artillery fire. The Cuirassiers of Gen Milhaud were already in this area, and the Red Lancers and Mounted Chasseurs placed themselves on their left. Next to them, the Mounted Dragoons and Grenadiers of the Guard, together with Gen Kellermann's cavalry corps, were drawn up between Hougoumont and Lefebvre-Desnoëttes' light regiments.

From this position, Marshal Ney launched several cavalry charges up the slope towards the Allied line drawn up along the slight but important ridge of Mont St Jean – futile attacks, since they were not supported by infantry or horse artillery to break up the Allied squares.

Three phases can be distinguished during these charges: the first executed by the eight Cuirassier regiments of Gen Milhaud, followed by the Red Lancers and Mounted Chasseurs; the second, by the same regiments; and the third, with reinforcement by six regiments of Kellerman's 3rd Cavalry Corps (the two Carabinier regiments staying in reserve), and by the Mounted Grenadiers and Dragoons of the Imperial

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Guard – about 16 regiments in total. A fourth charge was made by the two Carabinier regiments together with the remains of the units which had already been engaged.

General Colbert, although wounded at Quatre-Bras on 16 June, charged at the head of his regiment with his arm supported by a sling. He led his Red Lancers towards the section of the Allied front line where the Butte de Lion was later raised; however, they did not succeed in breaking one of the British squares. Intimidated by the crossfire of the squares, numbers of which were positioned in a checkerboard pattern for mutual support, the lancers could only whirl through the British positions. When they crossed the transverse Braine l'Alleud–Ohain road they were counter-attacked by the British 7th and 15th Hussars, who were supported by the Cumberland Hussars. These latter – Hanoverian troops in British service – immediately broke and fled towards Brussels. The Guard light cavalry, tired by repeated charges over the heavy, churned-up ground under Allied artillery fire, were forced to retire; riding back between the Allied squares, they formed up again near Hougoumont. From there they charged several times more, but further to the west than their original attack. The other regiments fared no better.

At around 7pm the Allied squares moved forward on Mont St Jean, showing almost their full extent to the French troops – although the enormous clouds of powder smoke hanging over the battlefield made it very difficult to interpret movements at any distance. From the east heavy gunfire could be heard. Napoleon spread the word that this was the approaching corps of Marshal Grouchy coming to their aid; in fact it was Von Bülow's Prussians, who were now approaching the eastern edge of the battlefield along two routes, forcing the emperor to commit increasing numbers of his reserves. In a last attempt to break Wellington's centre before the pressure of the Prussians became unsustainable, the emperor threw his final battalions of the Middle Guard into the assault. When this attempt failed, the retreating Foot Guard regiments took the remaining Line troops with them in a retreat which soon became a rout.

The Red Lancers were still with the rest of the cavalry near Hougoumont. As night fell they could not distinguish which troops were passing by; the only thing that they could hear was a strong cannonade from behind their lines – the last guns of the Guard, still defending their positions against the Allied general advance. Suddenly they noticed Allied cavalry in front of them, and infantry coming out of the Hougoumont woods. There was only one thing they could do: retire.

Fleeing troops and baggage wagons blocked the roads, so the Red Lancers and Mounted Chasseurs followed the retreat through the fields at some distance from the main road. With Genappe on their left, they crossed the River Dyle and arrived around midnight at Quatre-Bras, where they halted without dismounting.

At this moment Napoleon arrived, accompanied by some members of his staff and the duty squadrons. He ordered Gen Colbert to scout the right flank of the army and to cross the Sambre at Marchiennes. The horses could not go much further; they had had no care for 18 hours. After two hours rest and a feed for the horses, the cavalry continued the retreat towards Avesnes. In a desperate attempt to save some of the army's equipment Gen Colbert ordered his men to tow some guns

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

with them, but lack of time forced them to abandon this plan.

Two days after Waterloo, Gen Colbert and his regiment arrived at Capelle where they found some wagons with muskets, which they gave to soldiers who had thrown away their arms during the retreat. With 200 mounted Dragoons joining them and Marshal Ney in the midst of their ranks, they were more or less the rearguard of the retreating Army of the North. An attempt was made to rally the army at La Fère; Laon was put in a state of defence, and Napoleon – who had retreated via Rocroi – left the supreme command to Marshal Soult. The soldiers of the Guard rallied around their Eagles, but more and more of them started to leave the ranks. The Light Cavalry brigade stayed near Laon from 23 until 25 June, and Soult gave Gen Colbert permission to return to Paris to get a doctor to look at his wounded arm. He arrived on 25 June, and after consulting the doctor he wrote a letter to Davout, Minister of War, to tell him that this wound prevented him from continuing on active service.

At Crépy, the duty squadrons were dismissed and returned bit by bit to the regiment. On 23 June 1815 the regiment listed the following strength (note that the company organisation into squadrons was not in number sequence, e.g. the 2nd Sqn comprised the 1st & 5th Companies):

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE
Veterans of the Red Lancers photographed during the Second Empire, in reconstructed uniforms which betray the fashions of a later generation, e.g. the looser trousers and much larger epaulettes. The veteran wearing a *czapska* is named as Lancer Verlinde, his bare-headed comrade as Lancer Dreux. (Anne S.K.Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library)

Staff: Present, eight officers, four troopers with four horses; killed, one horse; missing, one officer, one trooper.

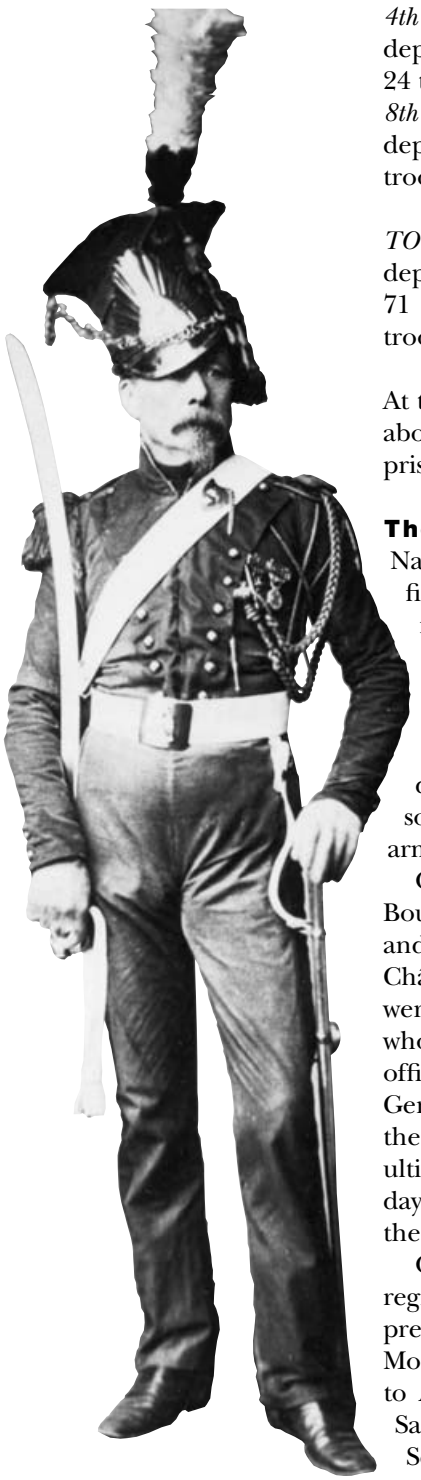
Polish (1st) Squadron: Present, two officers, 60 troopers with 60 horses; at the small depot, ten troopers with 12 horses; killed, eight troopers, 16 horses; missing, two officers, 29 troopers, 19 horses.
2nd Squadron:
1st Company: Present, one officer, 56 troopers with 56 horses; at small depot, one officer, 13 troopers with seven horses; killed, seven horses; missing, two officers, 23 troopers, 29 horses.
5th Company: Present, three officers, 50 troopers with 50 horses; at depot, one officer, seven troopers with five horses; killed, three troopers, one horse; in hospital, one trooper; missing, 28 troopers, 34 horses.
3rd Squadron:
2nd Company: Present, four officers, 65 troopers with 65 horses; at depot, eight troopers with seven horses; killed, ten horses; in hospital, five troopers; missing, 14 troopers, 15 horses.
6th Company: Present, three officers, 56 troopers with 56 horses; at depot, seven troopers with six horses; killed, one trooper, four horses; in hospital, one trooper; missing, 18 troopers, 17 horses.
4th Squadron:
3rd Company: Present, one officer, 54 troopers with 54 horses; at depot,

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

one officer, 12 troopers with eight horses; killed, two troopers, six horses; in hospital, two troopers; missing, 25 troopers, 27 horses.
7th Company: Present, 49 troopers with 49 horses; at depot, one officer, 14 troopers with eight horses; killed, one officer, two troopers, one horse; missing, two officers, 20 troopers, 27 horses.
5th Squadron:
4th Company: Present, three officers, 58 troopers with 54 horses; at depot, seven troopers with two horses; killed, 15 horses; missing, 24 troopers, 18 horses.
8th Company: Present, four officers, 55 troopers with 56 horses; at depot, 11 troopers with four horses; killed, ten horses; missing, 26 troopers, 20 horses.

TOTAL: Present, 30 officers, 507 troopers with 504 horses; small depot, four officers, 89 troopers with 59 horses; killed, 16 troopers, 71 horses; in hospital, nine troopers; missing, seven officers, 208 troopers, 206 horses.

At this roll call, the officers, all men and horses of whose fate or whereabouts nothing was known were listed as missing; they may have been prisoners, dead, wounded or lost.



The last days

Napoleon had signed his second abdication two days before these figures were recorded, on 21 June. The Imperial Guard continued its march towards Paris via Soissons three days later, arriving at the capital on 28 June. Although reinforced by soldiers coming from the garrison at Versailles, the regiment still lost numbers who left for their homes without permission, and at the end of that month the Red Lancers had no more than 450 men. The situation developed on the political level; attempts were made to organise some kind of resistance to the advancing Allied armies, but an armistice was quickly signed, and the army was directed to Orleans.

On 16 July the troops again replaced the tricolour with the white Bourbon cockade. A month later the regiment still had 37 officers and 562 men with 51 officers' horses and 610 troop horses. It was at Châtellerault that Gen Colbert said farewell to his regiment; their days were numbered. The first troops to leave were the Poles of the 1st Sqn, who marched off towards Warsaw and the service of the Tsar – ten officers, 179 troopers with 196 horses in total. Before they left the ranks, Gen Colbert and the rest of the Red Lancers offered them a meal, at the end of which an officer of the Red Lancers sang a song as the ultimate goodbye. The Polish lancers left Mirebeau on 26 August; two days later they slept at Tours, where they received their orders from the Allied powers.

On 30 August, a Royal Ordnance stipulated the disbanding of the regiment. The Red Lancers were dispersed, presumably in order to prevent any mass act of defiance. The staff and 2nd Sqn went to Montpellier, where they were disbanded on 22 December; the 3rd went to Agen and was disbanded one day earlier; the 4th went to Castel-Sarrazin, and would be the first to be disbanded on 9 November; the 5th Sqn at Grenade was disbanded on 16 November. During these last days,

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

the regiment counted 33 officers and 472 troopers with a total of 518 horses. Most of the soldiers passed into Line cavalry regiments, though some were accepted by the Royal Guard; others simply went home on half-pay. The last event we find in the records concerning the Red Lancers was an ugly little tragedy: at Montauban, a vengeful mob murdered four unarmed NCOs of the regiment who were trying to make their way home.

* * *

General Colbert was imprisoned for two months, and exiled from Paris for another four months, returning to the capital in January 1816; it would be another ten years before he was accepted into service once more. This punishment was not so much for rallying to the Bonapartist cause, but because of his presenting himself to Napoleon at the Carousel review of March 1815. He would live until 1853, rising through senior appointments in the army, and seeing active service once again in Algeria in 1836. The previous year he had been wounded in the explosion of the assassin Fieschi's 'infernal machine' which killed Marshal Mortier.

The proud tradition of the Red Lancers was to be echoed in several lancer regiments of later date. One was that organised for the Dutch army in 1819, whose first commander was Gen Dubois, former colonel-major of the Red Lancers. Predictably, this regiment became a copy of the Red Lancers in which that officer had served during its whole existence. The instructions on handling the lance were written by Gen Dubois based on the 1811 instructions of Gen Count Krasinski. The officers and troopers of this newly created Lancer Regiment No.10 – of whom several quartermasters were of Belgian origin – still spoke French. The cut of the uniform and equipment were copies of the Red Lancers except for the colours. The uniform of the Dutch Bengal Lancers in the East Indies (1817–27) was also an exact copy of that of the Red Lancers; very uncomfortable for a tropical climate, its choice is perhaps explained by the service in that colony of several Dutch former officers of the regiment.

In the 1830s, after the July Revolution in France, the Hussars of the Charente were transformed into the Lancers of Nemours. They were clad in scarlet uniforms with blue lapels, cuffs, etc. – a choice perhaps influenced by Gen Colbert, who served from 1834 as ADC to the Duke of Nemours, the colonel-in-chief of the regiment.

***Chef d'escadron* Albert de Watteville (1787), son of a wealthy Swiss family, ordered his uniforms from one of the most famous and fashionable tailors in Paris. This portrait gives a good view of the aiguillettes and shoulder knot. De Watteville was already in poor health when he left Versailles to join his troops in 1812; he would fall victim to infection and frostbite, and would die by the roadside in November during the retreat from Moscow. His body was robbed by Cossacks and abandoned. (Private collection)**

THE PLATES

A1: General Baron Edouard Colbert de Chabanais, 1811

The regimental colonels of the Imperial Guard units, with the rank of general, wore lavish oakleaf embroidery as a distinction of their rank; here it is applied to the *czapska* and *kurtka*. This figure is a reconstruction from a portrait painting by Alexandre-Jean Dubois and personal souvenirs of Gen Colbert. Note that in order to don the luxurious fur overcoat he has unfastened his massive three-starred epaulettes from the *brides* and rebuttoned them hanging forwards on the chest. In the left background we see the general's horse, with triple gold lace trim on the shabraque, an imitation panther-skin saddle cover, and typical highly decorated bridle.

A2: Colonel-Major Charles Dubois; full dress, c.1813

This field officer is wearing a typical uniform for his grade. The

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

figure is again based on a portrait by Alexandre-Jean Dubois, better known as Dubois-Drahonet. Note the heavy gold bullion epaulettes, the aiguillettes on the right shoulder, and the gold lace facing and silver fittings of his belts. The blue-ribboned medal is the Imperial Order of the Reunion, the second grand order of the Empire. The colonel-major would be received into the Legion of Honour in 1814, and would be promoted general in 1815. In the right background is his horse, with the two equal gold lace edge stripes of a field officer on the shabraque – a feature visible in the Dubois portrait.

B1: Officer, early regimental uniform, 1811

This uniform, with some surprising features, was worn in the early days of the regiment. To the basis of a typical Polish style of uniform some Dutch hussar items have been added, such as the pouch belt and the barrel sash, the latter made of gold thread with gold and black mixed barrels. Note also the aiguillettes worn here on the left shoulder rather than the right; the broad gold lace band at the top of the czapska, and the red pompon at the base of the plume; and the dark blue 'vandyked' edging to the single gold trouser stripe. After a contemporary engraving by Van Langendijk.

B2: Officer, parade dress, 1811–14

The czapska is after a model on display at the Invalides in Paris; two unusual features are the gold braid around the edges of the square top, and the plume fixed into a gold pompon. The gold-laced waist belt is here worn together with the full parade sash of gold mixed with blue. This officer too wears his aiguillettes on the left. Notice the very tight Polish breeches over the short red Morocco boots; and the gilded pouch with a silver Imperial eagle badge. (Such items as pouches seem to have varied with personal taste and wealth.) From this angle the regulation dark blue piping at the rear of the kurtka can be seen.

B3: Officer, full dress, 1811–14

This figure, after a drawing by De Stuers, shows the squadron officer's shabraque with one narrow gold lace stripe inside one wider stripe. Again, note the highly decorated light cavalry bridle. it is unusual to see the valise carried with this order of dress, but the source shows it.

C1: Officer, gala or court dress, 1811–14

The knee breeches and stockings could be made of silk or, for less important occasions, of cotton. The scarlet, blue-piped coat is of the same cut as the undress uniform of the Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard, but with rounded lapels; note that the dark blue facings appear only at the cuffs. A bicorn hat replaces the czapska.

C2 & C3: Officers in campaign dress

These figures are after a contemporary painting by Baron Lejeune, a fine painter and also a veteran officer who served in battle in a number of different campaigns from central Europe to Spain.

The headdress of C3 is covered with a semi-transparent oiled cover. For everyday use (*tenue ordinaire*) or for marching order (*tenue de route*) the kurtka lapels were buttoned across – always towards the shoulder with the aiguillettes – showing only a line of the dark blue facings on the outer edges. Sometimes the top buttons were not fastened so that the top corner of the lapels fell open.

In January 1812, Marshal Bessières, on behalf of Gen Colbert, asked the emperor's permission for the officers to order '*petit tenue de guerre*' in the same style as the full dress but of lesser quality, in order to spare the full dress hard use but still to make the same striking impression on campaign. On 8 January the emperor asked to see a model at the next parade on 12 January. Four days later Gen Colbert wrote personally to the emperor saying that the regiment had blue undress uniforms in the same style as the full dress. They were used as '*petit tenue de garnison*' (and probably as campaign dress); if the emperor would not allow Colbert to order the red campaign quality uniforms, he would use the blue ones instead. On 18 January Napoleon forwarded Colbert's petition to Marshal Bessières to examine its possibility. We have no idea whether it was granted; but since the regiment left Versailles during the night of 9/10 February 1812, such permission could hardly have been acted upon in practice.

***Chef d'escadron* Jean J.A.Schneither (1779–1849), painted by Dubois-Drahonet in January 1814 when he was at Versailles helping to rebuild the regiment after the German campaign; he was promoted to this rank in the Young Guard squadrons in March 1813. As captain of the 4th Company, Schneither had commanded the first detachment of lancers sent forward on 25 October 1812 to keep an eye on the Cossacks massing before the village of Oevarofskoie, near Borovsk. Outnumbered, he and his 50-odd troopers were soon cut off, and several charges by the other squadrons were needed to drive the Cossacks back into the woods. (Collection of Dutch Military Academy, Breda)**

C4: Officer, walking-out dress

After regimental papers. The Polish-style headdress, a so-called *confederatka*, is painted after an original owned by Chef d'escadron de Watteville now on show in the Berne Historical Museum in Switzerland. The oakleaf embroidery has no rank significance and is pure fancy in this case. This figure shows the front of the coat also worn by C1.

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Captain Hendrik Werner (b.1768) in the uniform worn during the First Restoration, 1814–15. The few changes included the replacement of the eagle on the shoulder belt by the Bourbon coat of arms showing three royal lilies on a crowned shield. Next to his Legion of Honour he wears the Order of the Lily. A former drummer boy in the Dutch army, Werner fought with the Dutch Hussars in Spain before being promoted captain in the Red Lancers in October 1810. In 1812 he served with the 8th Company, 4th Squadron. (Author's collection)

D1: Lancer, full dress, 1811–14
After regulations, contemporary items and engravings. See also description in body text under 'Uniforms'. The uniform of a corporal *(brigadier)* was the same except for the addition of two yellow wool chevrons above the cuffs. This man wears the double cross belt incorporating the pouch belt and the sling for the carbine which was issued in time for the Russian campaign. For ease of handling his lance, the carbine has been removed from its snap hook on the sling and attached to the right side of his saddle. The sheep skin cover has a yellow edge trim.

D2: Maréchal-des-logis, full dress, 1811–14
The uniform of the senior NCOs – here, a sergeant – was the same as the troopers' except for certain distinctions. A single gold rank chevron was worn above the cuffs; the cap cords and aiguillettes were of mixed red and gold; and the single right hand epaulette had a single layer of gold fringe above two layers of red. The *maréchal-des-logis-chef* (sergeant–major) wore two gold chevrons above the cuffs, and more gold in the mixed epaulette and cap and shoulder cords. Both D1 and D2 carry the early Chasseur pattern sabre with its brass-sheathed scabbard.

D3: Lancer in early regimental uniform, 1811
See commentary to B1; this figure too is after an engraving by Langendijk, showing a trooper at the time of the creation of the regiment when the Polish-style uniform retained some hussar features – black pouch and waist belts, and a yellow barrel sash with yellow and black mixed barrels. Notice also the yellow braid around the top of the lancer cap, the red tip to the plume, the buttoned blue stripe down the red trousers (overalls), and the short-cuffed gloves shown as buff rather than whitened. Langendijk also shows a pair of yellow shoulder cords ending in trefoils, rather than an epaulette on the right; the shabraque with a single yellow braid edge stripe; the saddle cover trimmed in red; and the yellow-trimmed blue valise and portmanteau illustrated.

E1 & E2: Lancers, campaign dress; Russia, 1812
Figure E1 shows a man at the opening of the Russian campaign, after regimental papers. The caped, sleeved

RIGHT **Captain Claude N.B.Gauthier (1767–1815) had been a corporal in the 4e Chasseurs à Cheval in 1792. He eventually transferred into the Red Lancers early in 1814 from the former Spanish Royal Guard of King Joseph Bonaparte. Wounded – for the third time – at Ligny on 16 June 1815 while serving with the duty squadrons attending Napoleon, he was killed at Waterloo two days later. The reversed epaulette and aiguillettes mark the appointment of adjutant-major. (Private collection)**

manteau-capote riding cloak or overcoat was new for the cavalry at this time. The rear corners of the shabraque are hooked up to keep the embroidered eagle badge away from thorns and mud. Trooper E2 is from De Castellane's journal and was seen by him at Moscow; we also know that Napoleon rebuked the regiment for wearing this pale blue *gilet d'écurie* stable jacket (sleeved 'waistcoat') about the city – an eyewitness wrote that the emperor complained to Gen Colbert that he had paid good money for the scarlet uniforms and that he expected to see them being worn! The shabraque has been removed; the saddle cover of black sheepskin has a red 'vandyked' trim; and the carbine, its lock protected by a cover, is strapped here on the left of the saddle.

E3: Lancer, campaign dress, 1811–14
This figure is reconstructed after regimental papers, and drawings by De Stuers and the famous painter Géricault, both eyewitnesses. The aiguillettes and epaulette were removed when on campaign. Note the very striking overalls with extensive leather reinforcement and five buttons on the pocket flaps; these seem to have been special to the Red Lancers. Many lancers were dismounted during the campaigns of 1812–14, and might have to walk a considerable distance before finding a remount – if ever.

F1: Trumpet-major, full dress, pre-1813
This figure is a reconstruction after regimental papers and preserved contemporary items. The black and white plume was only recorded in the regimental papers for the trumpeters. Notice also the details of the busby; and the special

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

trumpet-major's waist belt with five lines of gold lace, and no buckle plate. His other distinctions include triple gold edging to the collar; single gold edging to the lapels, which also bear gold lace buttonhole loops; and the rank insignia of a sergeant-major. With no known source, his horse furniture is conjectural: it could have been as D3, perhaps with two or three gold edge stripes, as shown by the 20th century French military painter Benigni.

F2: Trumpeter, full dress, pre-1813

From the same sources as B1. Notice the waist belt with only four gold stripes; the single gold lace collar edging, and the single chevron set on the scarlet cuff facing. Most other features seem to be shared with the trumpet-major. His horse furniture would be the same as D3.

F3: Trumpeter, full dress, 1813–14

This figure is drawn after the Vernet-Lami series. These painters were eyewitnesses, and can be taken as accurate when they show us a red-tipped white plume on the czapska, even though no such item is recorded in the regimental papers.

G1: Trumpeter, undress uniform, 1813–14

Apart from the white and red parade dress, the trumpeters of the Red Lancers received a uniform of dark sky blue *(bleu céleste foncé)* faced with scarlet, worn on non-official parades or when the emperor was not present. The gold trim is slightly less extensive than on the white uniform, but the rank distinctions are the same. The czapska remains white; the plume should have been black tipped with white in 1811–13 and white tipped with red thereafter. With this uniform, the horse furniture is the same as for the troopers.

G2: Trumpeter, campaign dress, 1811–14

After regimental papers. The dark sky blue jacket is buttoned across here; note the gold lace collar edging and cuff chevron, and the fact that while troopers seem to have removed their aiguillettes and epaulette in the field, trumpeters did not.

G3: Trumpeter, campaign dress; Russia, 1812

See E3 commentary for the main points of this figure. This is not the dark sky blue special uniform but the much plainer stable jacket, its collar facing rather faded with use; the trumpeter has added his NCOs' aiguillettes and epaulette.

H1: Lancer of Young Guard squadrons, full dress, 1813–14

Apart from the reversed colours, the uniform of the 6th to 10th Sqns which fought in the Low Countries was also plainer in detail than that of the Old Guard squadrons. The czapska lacked the 'sunray' plate; the epaulette and aiguillettes were replaced with simple blue 'duck-foot' shoulder straps piped red; and the shabraque had only one yellow stripe.

H2: NCO of Young Guard squadrons, 1813–14

Most of the NCOs came from the senior Old Guard squadrons and were authorised to continue wearing their czapska, epaulette and aiguillettes; their shabraques also displayed the double edge stripes. Notice the more ordinary overalls. Both this figure and E1 are armed with the *An XI* light cavalry sabre with a three-bar brass hilt and an iron scabbard.

H3: Lancer of Young Guard squadrons, overcoat, 1813–14

This figure shows the red-collared, light tan *(écru)* riding overcoat given to the Young Guard squadrons. As so often, it is worn here as a cloak, fastened at the top only and with the empty sleeves hanging.

Although unsigned, and a good deal less sophisticated than his identified work, it has been speculated that this miniature of a quartermaster of the Red Lancers may be attributed to the painter-*vélite* Alexandre Dubois (later Dubois-Drahonet), whom the features resemble. Interestingly, a line of red shows clearly up the front edges of the blue-faced collar. The *brigadier-fourrier's* rank is shown by the diagonal stripe on his upper left sleeve, finished here as textured gold braid; he would also be wearing two yellow corporal's chevrons above the cuffs. The epaulette, on his left shoulder, seems to be plain yellow and dark blue; the mixed yellow and blue aiguillettes on his right shoulder – i.e. the officer's side – may have an admixture of red, though the rough technique makes this unclear. The slightly ambiguous status of *vélites* – officer aspirants serving at their own expense in the ranks while being trained for an eventual commission – makes such details as the aiguillettes intriguing. (Anne S.K.Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library)

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

INDEX

Figures in **bold** refer to illustrations.

aiguillettes **A2**, **B1–2**, 9, 11, **12**, **16**, **34**, 44, **44**, 45
Angoulême, Duchess of 33–34, 34

Babinovitz 14
Balveren, Captain Walraven E.J. van (1784–1865) **5**
Batavian Republic 3
Belgium 3, 23–24
Bessières, Marshal Jean-Baptiste (168–1813) 5, 6, 7, 45
Bonaparte, Louis, King of Holland (1778–1846) 3, 4
boots 10
Borisov 14
Borodino, battle of, 1812 15
Brack, Captain Fortuné de (1789–1850) **24**
Brussels 12, 23, 24

Calkoen, Captain Abraham (1780–1830) **4**
casualties 15, 16, 18, 19–20, 21–22, 22, 39, 42–43
Colbert, Napoléon Auguste **8**
Colbert de Chabanais, General Baron Edouard (1774–1853) **A1**, 3, 7, **7**, 24, 33, 34, 44, 45
  and the Hundred Days 35–36, 36, 37, 38, 43
  and the Russian campaign 12, 14, 16, 16–17, 17–18, 18
  at Waterloo **38**, 41, 41–42
conversion to lancers 6–7
Corps Royal des Chevau-légers Lanciers de France 33–35, 35–36
Cossacks 7, 16, **17**, 17–18, 21
Crépy 42

Desna, River 16–17
disbandment 43–44
Dresden, battle of, 1813 22
Dubois, Colonel-Major Charles **A2**, 4, 6, 8, 17, 33, **34**, 37, 44, 44–45
Dubois (-Drahonet), Alexandre (1790–1834) 9, **34**, **47**
Dutch 3rd Hussar Regiment 4, 4–5
Dutch Army **40**, 44
Dutch Bengal Lancers 44
Dutch Royal Guard **3**, 3–4, **4**, 4–5, **5**

epaulettes **A2**, 9, **13**, 44, **47**
equipment 10–11
establishment 6, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 33, 36, 37, 42–43, 43, 44

families 8
Félix, *Inspecteur aux Revues de la Garde* 6
First Restoration, the 33–35, **46**
foreign personnel 6, 36
formations **10**, **21**
Frasnes 38, 39
French campaign, 1814 23–24, 33

Gauthier, Captain Claude N.B. (1767–1815) **46**
German campaign, 1813 20–23
Grouchy, Marshal Emmanuel (1766–1847) 15
Guards of Honour 24

Hanau, battle of, 1813 23
Hasselt, Major Jan van (1776–1812) 6, **13**, 14, 18, 19, 20
headdress **C3**, **5**, 9, 10, 11, **12**, **17**, **20**, **36**, 45
Holland, Kingdom of 3–4, 8, 23–24
horse furniture **B3**, 11, 45
horses **A1**, 6, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 36, 37, 42–43, 44
Hundred Days campaign, 1815 35–40
  Waterloo **38**, **39**, 40–43

Imperial Guard 3, 12, 19, 33, 36, 37, 43
  1st (Polish) Lancers 6–7, 9, 15, 17
incorporation of Dutch Royal Guard 4, 4–5
  at Waterloo 40, 40–41, 42

Krasnoï, battle of, 1812 18

Lancer Brigade, the 15, 15–16, 17–18, 21
Lancers of Nemours 44
Leipzig, battle of, 1813 23
Ligny, battle of, 1815 38, 39
Lützen, battle of, 1813 21

Maison, General Nicholas Joseph (1771–1840) 24
Mont St Jean 24, 39, 40, 41
Montauban 44
Moscow 16

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 20, 22
  abdications 33, 43
  birthday parades 3, 22
  French campaign 24, 33
    and the Hundred Days 35, 37, 39, 41
  Russian campaign 18, 19
  state visits 8
    and uniforms 45, 46
Netherlands, the 3
Ney, Marshal Michel (1769–1815) 37, 40, 42
non-commissioned officers **D2**, **H2**, 6, 9, **9**, **16**, **33**, 34, 46, 47

officers 6, 16, 20, 22, 24, 35, 36, 37, 42–43
  Corps Royal des Chevau-légers Lanciers de France 33, 34
  uniforms **A–C**, 7, 11, **13**, **23**, 44–45
Orcha 14, 18
organisation 6, 20, 33, 34
origins 3–4
Orleans 34, 35, 36

parades 3, **19**, 22
pennons **6**, **15**, **19**
Post, Captain Jan 19, 23, **23**
Prussia 12–13, 20

Quatre-Bras, battle of, 1815 37–39

rank, insignia of **D2**, **9**, 9, 46, **47**
Reichenbach 21–22
Royal Corps of France 33
Russian campaign, 1812 **E1–2**, **G3**, 12–13, **17**, 46, 47
  advance to Moscow 13–16
  retreat from Moscow 16–20, **19**

Schneither, *Chef d'escadron* Jean J.A. (1779–1849) **45**
Smolensk, battle of, 1812 15
Spain 4, 24
standards 7, 12, 34, 36, 43
Stuers, *Chef d'escadron* Hubert J.J.L. de (1789–1861) **37**

Tiecken, Chef d'escadron de M.M.B. de 24, **40**
Töplitz, action at, 1813 22
training 6–7, 8
trumpet banners **22**
trumpeters **F–G**, 6, 8, **11**, 11–12, **19**, 46–47

uniforms and dress **D3**, 3, **6**, 7, **18**, 20, **42–43**, 46
  campaign **C1–2**, **E**, **G2–3**, 9, 10, 12, **17**, **33**, 45, 46, 47
  cloaks **E1**, 10, 46
  court **C1**, 45
  full dress **B3**, **D1–2**, **F**, **H1**, 10, **12**, 45, 46, 46–47, 47
  the *kurtka* **9**, 9–10, **12**
  officers **A–C**, 7, 11, **13**, **23**, 44–45
  overalls **E3**, 10, 46
  overcoats **H3**, 47
  parade **B2**, 9, 45
  stable jackets **E2**, 10, 46
  trousers 10, **12**
  trumpeters **F–G**, 8, **11**, 11–12, 46–47
  undress **G1**, 47
  walking out **C4**, 45

vélites 8, 20, **47**
Versailles 4–5, 8, 20, 33, 36
Vileyka 14
Vilna 19

Walcheren expedition, 1809 4
Waterloo, battle of, 1815 **38**, **39**, 40–43
Watteville, *Chef d'escadron* Albert de **44**
weapons
  carbines **D1**, 7, 11, 12, **15**, **19**, 21, 46
  the lance 6–7, 11, **19**, 20–21
  pistols 11, 21
  sabres **D1–2**, **H1–2**, 7, 11, **12**, 21, 46, 47
Werner, Captain Hendrik **46**
Wijchel, *Sous-lieutenant* Adriaan p.Paats van **14**

Young Guard squadrons **H**, 10, 20, 24, 47

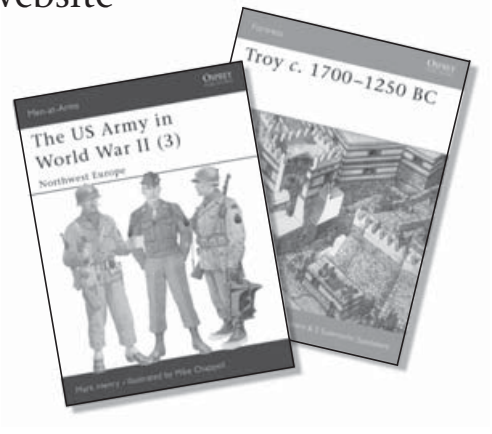
© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

Related Titles

PDF ISBN	SERIES	No.	TITLE
9781780963648	Men-at-Arms	86	Samurai Armies 1550–1615
9781846036989	Men-at-Arms	183	Modern African Wars (1)
9781846037009	Men-at-Arms	202	Modern African Wars (2)
9781846037016	Men-at-Arms	209	The War in Cambodia 1970–75
9781849089531	Men-at-Arms	242	Modern African Wars (3)
9781780962481	Men-at-Arms	432	Japanese Special Naval Landing Forces
9781780963396	Men-at-Arms	434	World War II German Police Units
9781780963525	Men-at-Arms	437	The Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection
9781780962467	Men-at-Arms	442	Queen Victoria's Highlanders
9781846037955	Men-at-Arms	449	The Royal Hungarian Army in World War II
9781849080965	Men-at-Arms	453	Armies of the East India Company 1750–1850
9781846038945	Men-at-Arms	455	US Armed Forces in China 1856–1941
9781849081825	Men-at-Arms	458	Army of the Republic of Vietnam 1955–75
9781849083270	Men-at-Arms	461	French Foreign Legion 1872–1914
9781849084840	Men-at-Arms	465	Brazilian Expeditionary Force in World War II
9781849084215	Men-at-Arms	468	World War II Soviet Armed Forces (2)
9781849085427	Men-at-Arms	470	Roman Centurions 753–31 BC
9781849084581	Men-at-Arms	471	Adowa Campaign
9781849085083	Men-at-Arms	472	Irish Rebellion
9781849085403	Men-at-Arms	473	New Zealand Expeditionary Force 1914–19
9781849084178	Men-at-Arms	474	The Chaco War 1932–35
9781849085984	Men-at-Arms	475	Spanish Army in North America c.1700–1783

Visit the Osprey website

- Information about forthcoming books
- Author information
- Read extracts and see sample pages
- Sign up for our free newsletters
- Competitions and prizes



www.ospreypublishing.com

To order any of these titles, or for more information on Osprey Publishing, contact:

North America *E-mail:* uscustomerservice@ospreypublishing.com

UK & Rest of World *E-mail:* customerservice@ospreypublishing.com

www.ospreypublishing.com

© Osprey Publishing • www.ospreypublishing.com

First published in Great Britain in 2003 by Osprey Publishing,
Midland House, West Way, Botley, Oxford OX2 0PH, UK
44-02 23rd St, Suite 219, Long Island City, NY 11101, USA
E-mail: info@ospreypublishing.com

© 2003 Osprey Publishing Ltd.

All rights reserved. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrical, chemical, mechanical, optical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner. Enquiries should be addressed to the Publishers.

Transferred to digital print on demand 2009

First published 2003
3rd impression 2007

Printed and bound by PrintOnDemand-Worldwide.com, Peterborough, UK

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Print ISBN: 978 1 84176 508 2
PDF e-book ISBN: 978 1 78096 558 1
ePub e-book ISBN: 978 1 78096 557 4

Editorial by Martin Windrow
Design by Alan Hamp
Index by Alan Rutter
Origination by The Electronic Page Company, Cwmbran, UK

Artist's Note
Readers may care to note that the original paintings from which the colour plates in this book were prepared are available for private sale. All reproduction copyright whatsoever is retained by the Publishers. All enquiries should be addressed to:
Patrice Courcelle, 33 Avenue des Vallons, 1410 Waterloo, Belgium
The Publishers regret that they can enter into no correspondence upon this matter.

© Osprey Publishing. Access to this book is not digitally restricted. In return, we ask you that you use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. Please don't upload this pdf to a peer-to-peer site, email it to everyone you know, or resell it. Osprey Publishing reserves all rights to its digital content and no part of these products may be copied, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise (except as permitted here), without the written permission of the publisher. Please support our continuing book publishing programme by using this pdf responsibly.

FOR A CATALOGUE OF ALL BOOKS PUBLISHED BY OSPREY MILITARY AND AVIATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Osprey Direct, c/o Random House Distribution Center,
400 Hahn Road, Westminster, MD 21157
Email: uscustomerservice@ospreypublishing.com

Osprey Direct, The Book Service Ltd, Distribution Centre,
Colchester Road, Frating Green, Colchester, Essex, CO7 7DW
E-mail: customerservice@ospreypublishing.com

www.ospreypublishing.com